

The Chicken-Wagon Family



Barry Benefield

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*The
Chicken-Wagon
Family*

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The Chicken-Wagon Family

BY
BARRY BENEFIELD



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To
MY MOTHER
(*who understands why*)

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NOTICE
Please do not write in this
book or turn down the pages

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CHAPTER I

—*This Is Old Long Emergency*

I AM Emergency. The rapsallion office-boys, I know, call me Old Emergency. Well, I have been here something more than a short while, and Time has visibly scorched me. Properly speaking, I am Long Emergency. When the day city editor makes out his schedule of assignments to hand on to the night city editor at six o'clock the last entry is always: "Pickett Long Emergency." The city editor threatens to have my name printed on the assignment form.

Yes, I am by way of becoming an institution in the "Star" office; an institution that somehow must be a little ridiculous, for I notice that when the Long Emergency Man is mentioned here in the office they all smile. If they think I am not noticing, that is; no one is malicious, and every

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one, even the almost entirely thoughtless office-boys, is tender with Old Long Emergency. I remember young Corbett—the boy with the high square forehead and the hand of a ham—soaking, as he delicately phrased it, a new office-boy who did not run as fast with one of my insignificant little paragraphs as he did with the big stories of the star men.

Dear hypothetical reader—I hypothecate a reader to keep my thoughts in order while I peck at this old Remington No. 4 as a safety-valve—the Long Emergency Man goes to work in this office at 7 P. M. and he is on duty until 3 A. M. The Short Emergency Man, a comparative aristocrat, who is usually some reporter who has had an unlucky day with his space assignments, goes off at 2 A. M., and by whispering to the night city editor he may often disappear at one o'clock.

We Emergency Men—I capitalize because although we be the lowly of newspaper men we must not be common nouns—take stories over the telephone from the men stationed in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and other places far away and altogether romantic, write obituary notices,

This Is Old Long Emergency

rewrite small things that come from the news agencies, and sometimes rush out to gather the fresh and awful facts of a story near-by. We are the peasant workers of a local news force, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, the odd-job men. In another office they would call me the Long Wait Man, or the Long Trick Man; but emergency is the best word for the job.

The aristocrats in our little kingdom are the space-reporters who go out early in the day or night on assignment, gather their material, return and write the stories that are to appear the next morning topped with those magnificent spread-heads, sometimes on the front page. And these aristocrats do not work for a salary; they are paid according to the number of columns of their literature—and it often is literature—that is printed. Not according to the number they write: there is a limit to the world's supply of white paper and legal tender. There, now, do I envy them? Once I—but never mind that.

At last it is 3 A. M., and the vast city room is almost dark. Here and there is a hooded green light left burning by a shiftless reporter; the

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equally thrifty treasurer of the mighty "Star" company would be shocked if he heard of such wastefulness and perhaps post a cautious and courteous and entirely useless notice on the bulletin-board. But either I or the scrub-women will rectify these mistakes of youth too full of life to be trivially wise.

By the time the scrub-women come I shall have had two hours all to myself. My old Remington shall rattle along in solo. It came into being before Freud was ever heard of, and perhaps it would be outraged and too rebellious to move if it knew I was using it as an instrument of psychic release. I have known it to refuse to write another line on far less provocation.

"Are you writing the story of your life, Mr. Pickett?" asked Fullerton, the last of the copy-readers to leave. All the men put "Mister" in front of my name when they speak directly to me. I wish they would n't; they don't do that to any of the other men.

Writing the story of my life? Well, why not? Why not write the story of my life? No one will ever see it. And doing that will be better than

This Is Old Long Emergency

staring into that thick darkness above my head at Mrs. Ainslie's and then at the wrinkled yellow plaster ceiling as the gray day filters down through the air-shaft outside my window.

Moreover, I shall have a chance to write Addie's name again and again, and all sorts of things about her, and tell how she appeared in a thousand settings, and what she said, and how she looked up from a lowered head through long black eyelashes at people she liked when she thought they deserved her approval or disapproval, and how she gave that low, throaty, velvet laugh which was a caress when one had pleased her and she was very happy. This business of writing hundreds of letters of explanation to her, which are never sent and were never meant to be sent, that must stop. That way lies—well, anyhow, I like the new plan better.

And to-morrow night I begin. Now I must go home. I shall walk up Broadway, at this time so quiet, so forlorn, so dimmed, so nearly forgotten by its lovers, all except myself. I love it between four and five in the morning. A few poor gaudy sisters of the streets, out late in the

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hope of repairing their earlier ill luck, will hail me with a "Hello, deary," and laugh with self-defensive derision as I pass on. But not many other people shall I meet.

I can stand undisturbed as long as I please reading Addie's stage name on the unlighted signs; and then all those happy times will come sweeping back to me—times when I could see her any day and hear her laugh a dozen times of a morning.

CHAPTER II

—O *Moon-White Roads!*

AND so at last my university days were at an end. My tent-mate, a middle-aged, bow-legged cowboy named Chet Trivers, had gone home in April to be swept into the office of sheriff at a local primary election. Two terms as a freshman, and an English instructor who acted as if he really believed the leaving off of the tail of a comma in a handwritten theme nothing less than wicked and obscene, had robbed poor Chet of some illusion which made the appeal of his admirers in Atascosa County irresistible. In strict fairness, there was some point to the instructor's discipline: he thought that a bunt comma might be mistaken for a period—and where, then, would the tottering old world be? Yes, Chet had gone, but he had hesitated a long time.

"I am elected," he had wired. "To hell with longhorn commas."

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As for me, the parchment I carried up the rocky hill behind the university where our weather-grayed household tent stood in solitary obscurity among the hackberry-trees was a testimonial to the fact that for four years I had been faithful to, among other things, the carefully rounded tails of millions of commas. But then I was young and without a scale of values; Chet was a middle-aged philosopher.

The last day went by and the night came and I sat alone in front of our tent smoking. Chet had bequeathed his half-interest in the tent and its contents to me, and I had bequeathed all interest to a pair of extremely adult and necessitous summer-school students—a man and his wife—who were mad with the passion for learning. The university always has many such students. Texas has, in more ways than one, the gusto, the gestures, the grand passions of great Elizabeth's day.

My heirs had arrived and were ready to take possession, but they were down there in the assembly-hall listening to orations; they were determined to miss nothing. I had told

O Moon-White Roads

them I should be gone when they got back.

And still I sat smoking. No letter had called me home. I had no home. My father, a small-town lawyer, had died while I was a college junior, and I had sold what property there was and bidden the town good-by when I had come for my last year in the university.

Well, I was ready to go. Where was I to go? It was June. A full moon swam directly overhead, trailing ten miles of white robes behind her. An utterly insane mocking-bird leaped about in the tree that shaded our tent indulging in the sinfulest orgies of song. Over the hill from a camp of Mexican road-workers came soft voices and the softer sound of a gut-stringed guitar. In the flood of light a dozen white country roads lay revealed stretching away to fairy-lands of hope and adventures far away.

Where should a bachelor of arts go and he free and poor and young and alone? I rolled up a blanket and set out along the road that looked the longest and had the most moonlight on it.

CHAPTER III

—A Queen Takes The Throne

THE great Fippany rebellion and revolution must now be read into the record. The details came to me afterward, but knowing all the characters—there were only three—I can easily reconstruct it.

Jean Paul Baptiste Yvonne Fippany was a chicken-wagon man and proud of it. For twelve years he had drifted about on the sandy land roads of northeast Texas, northern Louisiana, and southern Arkansas. He observed no holiday season, or he considered all his days one long holiday; summer and winter, spring and fall, his red-wheeled, white-topped wagon rolled on.

The bed of the wagon was merely a large crate in which he transported his fowls. They came to him in barter from the farmers: a forty-cent hen (and she usually a stubborn setting hen

A Queen Takes The Throne

which the crafty farmer's wife wished to get rid of) for a fifteen-cent tin pan, a dozen eggs for a two-cent tin cup, a two-dollar turkey for a fifty-cent map in emphatic gaudy colors of the Holy Land showing in large black letters all the places mentioned in the Bible in connection with Jesus. His trading stock he carried on top of the crate, and all was covered with a canvas stretched over rounded hickory bows.

What Mr. Fippany got in barter he sold to the merchants in the next sizable town he visited; and from time to time he replenished from St. Louis his stock of tinware, Bibles, lithographed maps of the Holy Land and of Hell, Heaven, and the Vital Organs of Man—and other much-needed articles, including pain-killers, corn-salves, chill-busters, fever-knockers, and an elegantly perfumed oil reputed (on the label of the bottle) to take the kinks out of hair, “if directions are followed.”

Mr. Fippany, so he told me in later and more smiling times, regretted none of his bartering trade except that in the hair-straightener.

“But, by dogs, how could I help it?” he would

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ask fiercely. "I was a merchant. The infernal black fools asked an' asked for it over an' over again. I put it in stock. That's all."

Mr. Jean P. B. Y. Fippany protested on this point too much. But surely the hair-straightener did no harm to the locks of his customers of color, and probably St. Peter with reference to it and him will be willing at the proper time to let bygones be bygones.

For two years Mr. Fippany rode alone. It was a life of ease. Where he stopped he was a welcomed guest: he brought news of the outside world, he was a stimulating contact, he was variety. And where he stopped he admitted, under questioning, that he had certain articles of barter in his wagon and was perfectly willing to trade. Sometimes he consented, also, to play a sociable game of poker—which was not to him either vocation or avocation but a passion—from which he expected no profit and realized none. He occasionally yielded to his passion in a large town with men as partners who deemed poker a vocation of the most serious

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sort. No, Mr. Fippany's poker, on the whole, returned to him no monetary profit.

Now and then, especially in the summer, he camped in the woods by the road. He always camped if night found him near one of those deep pine forests so frequent in his territory. He liked to sleep on a bed of soft brown pine straw, and he liked to listen to the wind in the tall pine-trees above him.

"I am a melancholy man, Jim," he explained once, "an' I always did like sad music. There 's nothin' sadder an' more soothin' than a slow wind away up in the topmost branches of a pine-tree. I used to sing hymns an' other mournful an' pure songs out there. Oh, I enjoyed the campin' nights. But ain't it strange that I enjoyed it all and me so sad? Have you ever thought of that, Jim?"

Mr. Fippany is not a melancholy man. He wore his eternal brown felt hat tipped rakishly over on the left side of his head, and his widely set brown eyes were filled with lights and not with shadows. In those days he always carried

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in his hat-band a row of toothpicks, red-headed matches, a nickel-plated ear-spoon, and several gay guinea-feathers. In the midst of his utilitarian tools the feathers had the effect of plumes. Of course Mrs. Fippany long ago banished the hat-band array, but he still wears a brown felt hat wickedly pulled down over his left eye.

After two years of riding alone Mr. Fippany was joined on the spring-seat on the front of the wagon by a young and smiling and somewhat portly woman with great black eyes, infinitesimal feet, and a voice small and exquisitely sweet. You looked at her and expected a voice robust surely and probably coarse. She spoke or laughed and you were taken aback with surprise and immediately felt as if you must applaud the music. Addie got her eyes, her black hair, the piercing sweet quietness of her voice from her mother.

A year later three rode in Mr. Fippany's chicken-wagon. Addie—Adelaide she is written in the family Bible—Addie Amy Fippany had been born in a Louisiana farm-house, near her

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mother's home, to which her father was driving as fast as he could, on Thanksgiving day.

"An' Josephine was a woman of plots an' conspiracies an' boundless ambitions from that very day," Mr. Fippany has confided to me many and many a time.

For nine years she executed tentative rebellions, and let them pass. She wanted—and she felt the enormity of her disloyalty in the eyes of Mr. Fippany—to desert the chicken-wagon, to settle somewhere, preferably in a town, to give her daughter what schooling and whatever additional advantages she could contrive; and no one will ever know the imperial size of the plans this chicken-wagon mother had nursed for years in her head as Kit and Luce, the two little Spanish mules, stepped daintily along those miles and miles of white sandy roads.

Keenly aware of the emotions of Mr. Fippany as to his trade and his team and his wagon and the open road, oppressed also by the lord-and-master tradition of her environment, she worked indirectly at first.

Mrs. Fippany began by complaining that the

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kind of life her family was living was undermining her health. She went into raptures every time the chicken-wagon passed through any town of over a thousand inhabitants. Whenever the Fippany family stopped at a farmer's house—which, as Mr. Fippany afterward confessed in strict confidence into my loyal ear, was less often than when he had ridden alone—she asked all the children how many years they had been in school, what they planned to make of themselves, how often they went to Sunday-school, and whether they liked to study—knowing of course that in answer to her last question they would say “yes” enthusiastically, under the eyes of their parents. She hoped Mr. Fippany was listening to her. Sometimes he did and smiled.

Often on the road she was silent for hours at a time, gazing steadily and unseeingly ahead. And then, suddenly, violently, she would pull Addie close up in her arms and tell her that there was nothing at all ahead for her—no home, no church, no education, nothing. She did not mention “husband,” though that word, and the glorious condition which she imagined associated

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with it in respect of her child and the sort of husband she had already selected for her, held first place in Mrs. Fippany's mind. Her great black eyes would fill with tears as she talked through the little girl at her husband.

"Don't do that, Josephine," Mr. Fippany would plead. "I don't know anything else but this business, an' we like it."

"You like it. I don't."

"It's a fine free life; an' look how healthy and happy the child is. I'll teach her when she is old enough."

"When, in Heaven's name, do people get old enough to be taught? tell me that. And what would you teach her—how to smoke a pipe, how to trade a tin pan for a Dominick setting hen, how to play poker, how to say, 'Giddap, Luce—giddap, Kit,' how—"

"Well, you teach her, then. Your education was one of the things that first attracted me to you."

"Which shows how ignorant you are, Jean. I know nothing and you know less. Addie Amy Fippany, there's nothing ahead for you."

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"Well, Josephine, you certainly took me in. Why, I myself got away up into McGuffey's Fifth Reader, into fractions, in history to the point where the damned Yankees were winnin' the Civil War, accordin' to the liar who wrote the book, an' then I quit; an' I studied geology an'—"

"Oh, God!" moaned Mrs. Fippany, rocking herself back and forth.

And so for years the manœuvers of the chicken-wagon mother were fruitless. "Never dispute with a woman in a tantrum, Jim," Mr. Fippany has often counseled me when recalling these attacks of his wife. "You must answer them back a little or they 're insulted an' hurt, as they have a right to be; but the first chance you get you drop the argument or, better, steer into a side road."

One day in June the chicken-wagon stopped in Crebillon, in upper Louisiana, and as the weather was warm and as Mr. Fippany remembered that there was n't a decent poker player in the town, he drove out late in the afternoon to camp in the woods by a small slow stream

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called Barthou's Bayou. Crossing a bridge, he turned into a deep forest of pines and halted on a high clay bank over the bayou, where he knew there was a spring of water. Here occurred the Battle of Barthou's Bayou.

When Mr. Fippany took the mules out of the traces to lead them down to the stream to drink, he noticed that his wife continued sitting on the spring-seat staring ahead of her, and that Addie, now ten years old, remained in the wagon under the canvas. When he came back they were as before. According to all precedent, Mrs. Fippany should have had out the frying-pan and coffee-pot and preparations under way for supper; and Addie should have been running races with Breaksteel, the short-legged beagle hound puppy she had recently adopted. But, no; Mrs. Josephine Fippany and daughter remained inactive, though Breaksteel stood barking at the back of the wagon.

"Are you feeling all right, Josephine?" asked Mr. Fippany.

"Fine!"

"Don't you like this campin'-place?"

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"As well as any camping-place."

"Well, what about supper?"

"I don't plan to cook any more suppers in the fine free out-of-doors."

"How come?"

"To-morrow Addie and I are going back to Crebillon to live or die."

"How come?"

"Oh, God!"

"An' leave me?"

"We two are going back to that town to live or die. We hope you will be with us."

Mrs. Fippany did not look at her husband during this dialogue. She was leaning forward, her chin in her hand, her elbow on her knee, staring ahead. It appeared that she scarcely thought it worth while to raise her head and turn her eyes in the direction of her husband. Break-steel, sensing the fact that his cue was to be quiet, had come to Mr. Fippany's feet and stood looking up at him.

Perhaps Mr. Fippany's poker-playing, in spite of his wife's frequent corrosive remarks about it, had given him some helpful training. At any

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rate, he has always been since I knew him a good sport. He never whines. He makes decisions rapidly. And he has always been quickly aware of the fact when he has drawn a noble hand or a blank.

He leaned down and began pulling at Breaksteel's long ears. "Breaksteel," he said, "we all want to go to town, we do. We are ashamed of our business. We are ashamed of the old wagon. Who are we, anyhow? Why, we are the chicken-wagon family an' ain't got no home—exceptin' only such as this."

And he looked up at the tops of the pine-trees and out through the great smooth copper-colored trunks to where a shaft of yellow sunlight fell slantingly upon the soft brown floor of the forest. He listened and heard the bayou whispering along its slow, restful way—and the sharp flap of a trout leaping into the air and fumbling and falling upon the surface of the water. And there was the sharp, clean, spicy odor of the pine-needles in his nostrils.

"Yes, Breaksteel," Mr. Fippany went on, snatching his hat far down over his left eye,

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and breathing loudly through his bearded nostrils. "Yes, we cain't be chicken-wagon people no more. It's disgraceful. We are ashamed. We are goin' to town, we are, Breaksteel; an', by dogs, we are goin' to the biggest damn town in the world. We are on our way to New York, Breaksteel!"

Mrs. Fippany screamed.

That night, glimpsing their camp-fire from the road, I joined them. That was the first time I saw Addie.

CHAPTER IV

—*A Bachelor Of Arts Explains*

IT must be that the psychologists are right, and that the release I find through this old Remington singing in solo in the dim morning hours, when I am alone here in the "Star" office, is doing me good. To-night I laughed out loud at some wild remark of young Corbett's—and everybody near me looked up in surprise. Mr. Herschell, that small, square, ruddy man who is the night city editor and a steam-engine in No. 5 shoes, took time to scribble a message to me on the margin of the proof of a short obituary I had done and to send it to me by an office-boy. "Bully!" he had written with his dreaded blue pencil with lead a quarter of an inch thick. Well, the subject of the obituary, as I had discovered when I talked to his family and his neighbors, had been of significance even though entirely obscure.

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But there, we must roll along with the chicken-wagon family. I am one of those shabby and wicked creatures who write letters and forget to mail them, until they are out of date. Going over my papers at Mrs. Ainslie's this afternoon, I found an old letter I had written to Chet Trivers about my meeting with the Fippanys and our plan to storm New York. I will drop it in here. It carries on the story.

DEAR HIGH SHERIFF:

I ought to be arrested, I suppose, and put somewhere for safe-keeping. I have joined a chicken-wagon man and his family in a devilish conspiracy to march on New York and loot it of whatever it has that appeals to the various members of our party.

I did not leave Austin by the I. & G. N.; I left on foot at 10 P. M. a week ago, with only a blanket for covering, with only confidence for food, with only the moon for light. Last night, two miles out of a little Louisiana town named Crebillon, I saw a camp-fire in the dark woods

A Bachelor Of Arts Explains

off the road and made for it: it was supper-time in the pines.

Let me introduce you to my co-conspirators. This is Mrs. Josephine Fippany. She goes to New York—as she would go to the North Pole or to a place nearer and hotter, if necessary—to get the best possible things of life for her daughter.

Here, then, is Addie Amy Fippany. She is ten. She has never had any school-room teaching. She has been on the road since she was born. She is a funny kid. I don't mean silly or comical. She never giggles. She looks straight at you gravely or away from you gravely. She is as direct as you are, and I think it is not merely the careless candor of childhood but an element of character that will always be with her. When something appeals to her as of the nature of the laughable, her face suddenly shines, her eyes begin dancing and rocking, and she gurgles and coos in the most fetching way. The child is not a beauty. She is rather thin, and her skin is not only sallow but she has on top of the sallow-

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ness two of those ugly dark brown spots that come, I believe, from the liver. What does she go to New York for? Because her father is going. He is her hero of heroes.

Mr. Jean Paul Baptiste Yvonne Fippany is going as a king in chains. Until last night he was the head of his family. Now he is merely a member of it. This much I have already gathered about my comrades. Mrs. Josephine Fippany is the sovereign ruler, and a regal figure she is too. Born here in upper Louisiana of French parents, she is a throw-back to some Gallic strain of men and women to whom the grand manner was as easy as the raising of the hand. Mr. Fippany says that if nothing better offers in New York—and he rather hopes nothing better will offer—he means to adopt genteel gambling as a profession.

Apart from Breaksteel, Addie's blue and black beagle hound puppy, and Kit and Luce, the supercilious and entirely elegant little Spanish mules, I am the only other member of the attacking party. What am I going for? Well, on the way—and afterward, too, I suppose—I shall

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teach Addie. Of course I must try to get a job. What kind of a job? Well, perhaps dish-drying is a profession in that romantic and highly specialized city. Or maybe they employ experts up there to make coffee. You will recall, I trust, my morning pot of coffee at Hackberry Hill, in Austin, on the Colorado, capital of the well-known State of Texas. You said yourself many 's the time that it was peerless. Or maybe New York has other corners into which it can stick mere bachelors of art. Texas undoubtedly has more individuals than any other three or four million people on earth who passionately desire to be these fancy collegiate bachelors of one sort or another, but probably New York has more use for them, at present.

Did you frown then and say, "Talk seriously or I'll switch you?" Well, Heaven only knows what I shall do in New York, Chet. New York and I have n't met.

As to finances, Mr. Fippany has five or six hundred dollars, and my bank-book and purse show a grand total of something over two thousand, though the Fippanys don't know what I've

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got. Mrs. Fippany was in favor of hurrying over to Shreveport, selling off the wagon and mules, disposing of Breaksteel, and taking the fastest and cheapest train for New York. Motion opposed by Addie on account of Breaksteel, by Mr. Fippany on account of his beloved Kit and Luce, and by me on account of the overland trip. Overwhelmed by numbers, Mrs. Fippany gave in. She is no doubt a benevolent dictator. Born dictators often are.

But there is to be no dawdling by the way to trade. To-morrow we return to Crebillon to sell off our chickens and eggs for what they will bring. We shall cast aside the crated wagon-bed and get a new one. Also a second spring-seat for Addie and me. We shall dispose of our other goods as we go on, for cash only.

And day after to-morrow the covered wagon starts for New York. The pioneering tide has turned. The West goes East—the South goes North—the Southwest goes Northeast. Allons! Forward! Giddap, Kit—giddap, Luce!

Oh, dear old Chet, I know you will be furious with me for joining in this mad business. But,

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look you, I am only twenty. I have little to lose. And to gain? Who knows? The road is calling. And these poor Fippany innocents, alas, they are simpler in many ways than even I.

Be furious with me, if you will, Chet Trivers, but please observe that I have, out of great delicacy, used no longhorn commas in this letter. I have taken a vow to use only shorthorn commas forever. Not that I love longhorn commas less—they are lovely things—but that I love my old tent-mate more, even more, much more.

If I am arrested I shall wire you. Then you can have me extradited, switch me, and turn me loose on the range.

Yours in the faith,

JIM PICKETT.

CHAPTER V

—*Gay Children Of The Road*

FOR Addie, Mr. Fippany and me it was a holiday trip, that overland journey across the country; but to Mrs. Fippany it was not a joyous pilgrimage. She felt resting upon herself the burden of the decision to desert the only business her husband knew and to attempt to make a living in a town. True, she had n't dreamed of any town larger than Crebillon, but she had accepted New York, which was coming nearer every day. And though she did not speak of her fears, she did not unbend and play as did the rest of us.

As we traveled she sat on the front seat staring intently ahead as if she were trying to see through the veil of the present into the future. At night by the camp-fire she sat alone with her thoughts. Probably she did not laugh a dozen times between Louisiana and New York. Tremendous dim eventualities were surely in her mind which

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she was trying to bring into clear outline by sheer force of thought.

But it was a holiday time for the rest of us, especially to me, who had been cooped up in college four years. Addie's lessons held no terrors for her. Up at 5:30 every morning except Sunday, when we slept late, we traveled until noon and then again from three to six; and our regular school-time was between one and three, though we worked in many an odd hour at other times, often as we jogged along the road in the morning and afternoon.

Addie, with Mrs. Fippany's aid, had already mastered McGuffey's First Reader and the absurdly easy first multiplication table and then the second, which itself has few teeth for the alert beginner. She now passed rapidly through the something less than brilliant prose narratives and unsullied poems of the Second and Third Readers. Arithmetic, for which she had an authentic flair, was a snap for the child. Addition, subtraction, and multiplication yielded to her without a struggle when she had conquered with her really remarkable memory all the multiplica-

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tion tables. Geography, gleaned from a thin square little text-book, was a delight, especially the colored maps; and history was a fascinating story for her.

Looking back now, I see her propped against a tree by the side of her preceptor, some distance away from the wagon. Breaksteel lies prostrate at her feet alternately sleeping and watching her eagerly. Mr. Fippany is bustling about the wagon. Mrs. Fippany sits on a spring-seat near the wagon, fanning herself with a huge palmetto fan, deep in thought. Our lessons are a game between Addie and me, and often her eyes rock and dance and there comes bubbling from her throat that rich caressing laughter of hers. Then Mrs. Fippany looks sternly in our direction. She does not trust teaching that has laughter in it.

Along about three o' clock Mr. Fippany knocks the ashes out of his pipe, and that tapping is a signal that we are to proceed on our journey. Books are slammed to; the gorgeous double slate all bound around with red flannel to keep its two sections from damaging each other by banging together is wiped clean of its problems, solved

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and unsolved; and we race to the wagon. Kit and Luce are hitched up. "Forward!" shouts Mr. Fippany. "Don't make so much noise," says Mrs. Fippany quietly. We are on our way again, and New York draws ever nearer.

Sometimes when we came to a likely stream of water we stopped for a day to fish, over Mrs. Fippany's vigorous protests; but when we were three to one, and the three enthusiastically unanimous, the dictator always yielded. And often at the end of a hot day, when we were camped near a body of water of any size, the three scatterbrains improvised bathing-suits and went in swimming. Mr. Fippany's and mine were pajama drawers; Addie's was simply a blue checked apron with the strings tied around her neck and a cord girdle around her waist to hold it somewhat down in the water.

Now and then as we sat about the camp-fire Mrs. Fippany would try to organize us into a business meeting. In order obviously to get our minds down to serious matters she would say that she was planning to start a boarding-house when we finally arrived at our destination, which some-

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how appeared fancifully impossible to all of us except her. Having spoken her mind, she would wait for Mr. Fippany to say something, but he was never serious.

“Don’t look at me, Josephine. Dogged if I know what I can do up there. I can trade, an’ I can play poker; an’ as we have left my kind of trade behind us I see nothin’ ahead for me exceptin’ poker. Come, Mr. Pickett, let’s have a few rounds to keep my hand in. The stakes will be high up there, I reckon, so each grain of corn will stand for a thousand dollars. I must get used to these big stakes.” He won hundreds of thousands of dollars from me that summer.

Sometimes Mrs. Fippany looked inquiringly at me, but having no plan whatsoever I said nothing, and she did not press me for an answer.

And so the red-wheeled wagon rolled along the winding white road through the green woods, and the impossible New York steadily approached the status of a possibility.

CHAPTER VI

—*We Come To Six-A House*

ON a sharp clear Sunday in November the Fippany caravan met Broadway far to the north of Forty-second Street. Once Broadway was only a country road winding southward from the plantations to the sea, and now again it was a country road for the little black hoofs of Kit and Luce. They stepped forward mincingly on the asphalt, their ears aural periscopes to catch the unaccustomed noises away up around Van Cortlandt Park even on Sunday. For around 242nd Street we found ourselves in a flood of automobiles and horse-drawn vehicles.

Kit and Luce betrayed no fear and probably felt none, but under the canvas cover stark terror gripped us all, to some extent even the imperial Mrs. Fippany, though she had for weeks been preparing herself for the shock of this collision. For ten days fear had been with us, growing

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hourly. It began as mere excitement. As we had talked of the coming city cold chills had run up and down our spines. No one had confessed this: confession was unnecessary, terror proclaimed itself.

Addie had given up her lessons four or five days back, and I had been glad. I could not concentrate. McGuffey's Fourth Reader could not hold me, and fractions were pieces of nonsense.

Mr. Fippamy was on that Sunday in what is known as a state. A good bit under medium height, he hunched himself so far forward and so low down on the seat that, by contrast with the erect and regal Mrs. Fippamy, he seemed to have almost no height. His shaggy brown eyebrows were puckered together, and his brown felt hat was pulled viciously down over his left eye. His muscles were taut, his nerves jumpy. His usual amiability and volubility had departed. He asked no questions and answered in cryptic style.

As our green-bodied wagon, its red wheels newly washed the night before, rolled past Van

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Cortlandt Park, Mrs. Fippany awoke from a trance, and, affecting an interest and an ease she probably did not feel, she pointed at the old stone Van Cortlandt mansion and asked sweetly, "What is that building, Jean, do you suppose?"

"Not knowin', cain't say," replied Mr. Fippany.

Addie and I had deserted our spring-seat to stand up behind Mr. and Mrs. Fippany so that we could see ahead better. Breaksteel, now a puppy of added stature but of no added dignity or reserve whatever, often put his front paws on the back of the front seat and caught glimpses of New York ahead. Sensing our fear, he whimpered often, and now and then when a fancy dog of fashion passed in an automobile or carriage—carriages were not then extinct in New York—he set up a terrific barking.

"Quiet!" Mr. Fippany would hiss in a ferocious whisper.

Near the park entrance Mr. Fippany caught sight of a fountain and trough. He turned the mules in that direction.

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"Why—" began Mrs. Fippany.

"Water mules," he snapped. "No tellin' when we 'll strike water again."

Addie, always the gravest of little mortals, was now superhumanly quiet and solemn. Her black eyebrows, as thick as her father's brown ones, were puckered together as close as his. Questions in flocks must have fluttered to her tightly closed lips. She kept them locked in.

And so Kit and Luce pulled along their load of terror. We crossed the Harlem River at 225th Street. We rolled on down Broadway into what I now know was the Washington Heights section, then sparsely built up.

"Where are we now, Jean?" asked Mrs. Fippany.

"Not knowin', cain't say."

We neared a policeman at 181st Street directing traffic. He waved wildly at us to keep on going and not to block the street. Mrs. Fippany's hand caught the lines; Kit and Luce stopped. The policeman rushed over to us.

"Go on, go on," he shouted. "Don't gum up things. Look at that line behind you."

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"Are we going right for New York?" asked Mrs. Fippany sweetly.

"My God, you 've been in New York an hour. Go on."

"The straightforward road?"

"Yes, yes, straight ahead; any way just so you keep moving."

And so we kept to the main traveled road, which in New York is Broadway.

We had eaten nothing since morning. Hunger and thirst were strong within us, but we did not realize it. We were waiting to achieve a destination before attending to such trifles as hunger and thirst.

Mr. Fippany's goal, on entering a town, was always the business section. There he found stores of supplies and good counsel. But we had come to nothing so far that fitted his notion of a business section. We passed miles and miles of tall buildings that were evidently filled with boxed-in homes of thousands upon thousands of people; and on many of the ground floors were stores, all closed except drug stores, candy stores, and back doors of saloons. But we saw no feed-

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stores, no wagon-yards, nothing that looked like one of our familiar halting-places.

Mr. Fippany drove on, Kit and Luce now and then breaking into a trot. We were too slow for the automobiles, which whizzed around us. Occasionally some one shouted a mocking question at us. Mr. Fippany answered nothing.

"Jean, had n't we better ask somebody?" suggested Mrs. Fippany.

"Ask 'em what?"

"Where we can stop for the night. The sun is more than half-way down the sky."

"We'll know the business section when we come to it. We'll ask there. Something will be open—a drug store, a saloon, a restaurant, or something."

But Mrs. Fippany's was a suggestion at least logical. And at 168th Street we turned out of Broadway, drew up at the side door of a saloon, and Mr. Fippany jumped down, beckoning me to come with him. He had been grievously disappointed in me every time we had passed through a city on our way northward. He had expected that a college man would know all about cities

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and how to get things in them. He had believed that a bachelor of arts would of course be a captain of men, a model of savoir faire, a man of the world, a master of the experience of centuries. Perhaps a bachelor of arts should be all those things, but, alas, I was not, I am not. He had called me to accompany him into the saloon not for aid but for mere company.

We entered the back room of the saloon. It was filled with tables and chairs and a good many people. A German waiter charged at us, motioning us to sit down.

"Where is the nearest wagon-yard?" asked Mr. Fippany.

The waiter shook his head. We called for the proprietor, and another German came to us. Outside I heard a deep buzzing as from a hive of mammoth bees.

"Where is the nearest wagon-yard?" Mr. Fippany demanded of the proprietor. No light appeared in his pale blue eyes, and I knew that the word "wagon-yard" had raised no picture in his mind.

"You know," Mr. Fippany went on, his voice

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rising nervously, his Gallic hands gesturing violently. "Where farmers stay at night when they come to town an' have n't time to get back home or don't want to go home. A big yard—you know—with stalls all around the sides for the beasties an' plenty of room in the middle for all the wagons. An' there is a shack for the wagoners to stay in."

The proprietor shook his head and turned to go away. We heard Breaksteel barking furiously.

"Where is a feed store, then?" shouted Mr. Fippany at the retiring German. His nerves were about to break. Always when he looked hard at a person he worked his great shaggy eyebrows quickly up and down as if he were having difficulty in focusing the object of his vision. Now he ran after the German, caught him by the arm, and focused him ferociously.

"Corn—oats—bran—hay, where sold?" he yelled, and rushed to the door. We opened it, but could barely squeeze outside. The sidewalk and street were black with people for half a block. Hundreds stood around our covered wagon.

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They merely stood and looked and talked. They were the source of the buzzing I had heard.

Breaksteel was running from the back to the front of the wagon barking defiance and threats. Mrs. Fippany sat erect holding the lines. Addie, white-faced, sat by her side. Kit and Luce drew away from all efforts to pet them or feed them peanuts.

Down the block two policemen came running. The crowd on their side opened a lane for them. Mr. Fippany yelled: "Gangway! Gangway!" and started for the wagon. The crowd opened up a lane for us too. We reached the wagon ahead of the policemen.

"What 's the matter here?" one of them asked.

"Nothin' 's the matter," answered Mr. Fippany focusing him with his eyebrows.

"You 're attracting a crowd and creating a disturbance and blocking the street."

"We did n't ask any crowd to come," answered Mr. Fippany peevishly.

"Move on, move on, or I 'll have to run you in."

Mr. Fippany cracked his whip. The massed

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bodies opened up, and we turned back into Broadway. The slowly melting crowd followed us ten or twelve blocks.

But now we were afraid even to ask questions, lest we break the law by being so terribly fascinating. We drove slowly on down Broadway. It was ever veering eastward as it ran south, and it kept crossing the severely straight and parallel numbered avenues, but Mr. Fippany never lost it.

As dusk dimmed the city, a quiet, persistent, very wet rain began falling, dampening down our already low spirits. Addie, shivering with cold, crawled under the blankets in the back of the wagon, with Breaksteel beside her for warmth and comfort.

"Mr. Pickett," asked Mr. Fippany—he had not yet reached the familiarity of just Jim—"you remember that map of New York you bought back yonder. You have studied it enough, the Lord knows. Tell me where Broadway stops, if it ever stops."

"It stops where the East River and the North River, which is the lower section of the Hudson River, and the Atlantic Ocean meet."

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"After that come Europe, Asia, and Africa, I reckon," Mr. Fippany moaned. "It seems like it will take us till to-morrow night to get to the end of Broadway."

"Why go to the end of Broadway?" asked Mrs. Fippany in her small, sweet voice, now a trifle acid. "Let 's turn into the first side street that looks dark, and maybe we can find somebody to tell us where to go, without being mobbed while we ask."

Mr. Fippany answered nothing and drove on down Broadway. We passed Forty-second Street, then Thirty-fourth Street, then Twenty-third Street, the surrounding city becoming darker and quieter the further south we went. And at Twenty-second Street we turned east, drove two or three blocks, and drew up near the curb by the side of a huge unlighted building.

Within five minutes, in spite of the rain and the darkness, six or eight men, a few women, and a dozen or so little boys and girls stood on the sidewalk scrutinizing our wagon in the dim light of the street-lights. They might have been trying to read some very difficult text on the side

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of our wagon-bed. And yet it bore only one word—"Studebaker."

Getting out, Mr. Fippany approached a staring man. "Can you tell me where the nearest wagon-yard is?" he asked hopelessly.

"I don't know what you mean. Where they fix wagons?"

"No, no, where people can put up themselves an' their teams for the night."

"I never heard of such a place."

"Well, where do farmers put up when they come to town with their teams an' want to stay over night?"

"I don't know. At some hotel, I guess."

"Yes, but even if they do go to the hotel, where do they put up their teams? You cain't leave a team in the street, I reckon, without breaking eighteen or twenty laws an' layin' yourself liable to your celebrated electric chair."

"Search me, friend," answered the good-natured man Mr. Fippany was cross-examining. "I never saw a farmer in New York, to know him."

Mr. Fippany turned back, crawled up on the

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wagon, and put his head down in his hands. The rain was falling fast now, beating on our canvas cover with heavy thumpings. The gazing crowd disappeared. The cold night drew in closer. A torrent of water was presently running along by the curb, and Kit and Luce bent down their heads to drink. Mrs. Fippany had gone back under the canvas to sit down by Addie. I thought I heard her sobbing. Addie, I knew, had for some time been quietly crying on Breaksteel's faithful neck.

"I 'm hungry, papa," she called out huskily.

Mr. Fippany started up suddenly. "Well, we 'll eat if hell breaks loose," he said defiantly. "Josephine, light the lantern an' get out those scraps we had left from breakfast. I 'll set out this bucket on the foot-board, an' it 'll be full of water in two minutes. An' when we are through, Mr. Pickett, I want you to take Addie and Mrs. Fippany to a hotel somewhere, an' you meet me here in the mornin' at nine o'clock. I 'm not goin' to stop until I find shelter for Kit and Luce. If not, I 'll stay with 'em. But whatever happens, I 'll be right here in the morning."

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Putting on a yellow slicker, and persuading Addie that I would not get lost and would be back in five minutes, I seized a covered tin bucket and went running down the street to a better lighted avenue, looking for a restaurant. I had the bucket filled with hot coffee and milk and raced back to the wagon.

By the light of a battered old lantern, with the rain thumping on our canvas and the wind rattling the wagon on its axles, sitting cold and shivering on the floor of the wagon-bed, we began our first meal in New York. The hot coffee warmed us, and the food started streams of vitality and hope coursing through our tired bodies.

"We 'll live yet," said Mr. Fippany.

"In New York?" asked Addie.

"In New York," replied Mr. Fippany.

We were almost finished when a pair of huge shoulders appeared above the front seat of the wagon, covered with a wet black rubber coat that glistened even in the feeble light cast by our lantern. Another policeman, as we could tell by his cap, and we feared the worst. We had prob-

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ably committed a felony by stopping in the street to eat.

But Policeman Hibbard was fat and friendly and not in a hurry. He put us at our ease at once. He came in and sat with us. We were at least in a dry place, and we were probably what is sometimes known as "picturesque." Mr. Fippany poured out an abridged version of our story, ending with the inevitable question about the wagon-yard.

"Sure," said Policeman Hibbard, "I know what you mean. We have 'em in Missouri, where I come from. But there's none here. Anyway, I never heard of one here. And if you ask me where you're going to put up this team for the night, I don't know. There's plenty of private stables here. And there's some of those high-toned places where you can hire a horse for a little ride in the park if you want to pay ten dollars or so. And there's places where horses are auctioned off. But the kind of place you're looking for I don't know of in this city at all."

Mr. Fippany's face, which had become radiant

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upon finding some one in New York who knew what he meant when he said wagon-yard, now again lost its light. We all sat silent. The wind was fairly howling around the cornices of the buildings. I looked out at Kit and Luce. They stood hunched up with their heads down before the driving rain.

"Yes, I do know a place," said Policeman Hibbard suddenly, after looking at Addie, "and I'll take you to it. You stay there until I give the word to move on. If anybody asks you anything about it, tell 'em you're caretakers of it for the city."

And in ten minutes we were inside an old fire-engine house that had been deserted by the city for a larger building in a location more strategically located for fire-fighting. Kit and Luce were in dry stalls. The much-traveled old covered wagon stood where the engine had stood. There was a fire, made from old boards, blazing in an ancient round iron stove on the second floor. And within an hour we lay in our blankets on a swept floor listening in cozy comfort to the steady pattering of the rain on our windows.

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We heard every few minutes a rushing thunder come out of the north or south and then quickly die away in the distance—the elevated trains. From the east came those hoarse hootings of river craft feeling their way through the storm. Down-stairs Kit and Luce audibly ground hay and corn, now and then indulging in the unaccustomed luxury of gnawing away some of the wooden feed-boxes.

But New York, as any other human habitation, must have a period of comparative quiet and rest. Along about midnight the elevated trains ran at longer and longer intervals. The boats in the river, except for an occasional old owl of a ferry, went to sleep. And we chicken-wagon people slept the sleep of the weary filled with the wine of hope.

And I fancy that the chicken-wagon mother saw in her dreams Addie Amy Fippany marrying the mayor of New York with the most splendid ceremony ever seen. Mr. Fippany probably saw himself sitting at a green-covered table in a gorgeously lighted room with piles of little red, white, and blue chips stacked so high and so thick

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on the table in front of him that he had to stand up and reach over them to play his cards. And young Breaksteel must have gone running with mad joy on the trail of a promising rabbit, for I heard him whimpering excitedly and scraping his legs on the floor; and he was never again to see a rabbit except in his dreams. And as for me, I dreamed of Addie sitting at sundown against the copper-brown trunk of an enormous pine-tree, a tense little barefooted figure in a faded pink dress, doing sums on her red-bound slate, while Breaksteel looked over her shoulder at the miracles she was performing.

CHAPTER VII

—*Fippany Feels A Shadow*

THE morning after we entered Policeman Hibbard's cobwebbed hostelry the sun was wide awake before we were, but by eight o'clock we were moving about and considering our problem. After all, we had, so far as we knew, found asylum for a night and a day only, and we might be adrift again by noon seeking the wagon-yard at the end of the rainbow. Hibbard had said he would look in again during the day unless something happened.

I slipped through the huge sliding doors of the old fire-engine house to search for supplies. By nine o'clock Mrs. Fippany had done a miracle of cooking on top of the antique round stove on the second floor, and Kit and Luce were making away with the last sweepings of our stock of corn, oats, hay, and bran.

While Mr. Fippany went out to discover a

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feed store the rest of us investigated thoroughly our quarters. In the cellar was a steam-heating furnace, a large coal-bin, and a lot of boards and boxes. On the ground floor were four stalls, an iron water-trough, a feed-room, and a small office. The gas and electricity were turned off, but the water answered, rust-red at first, every tap in the building. The second floor except for two bath-rooms and a small bedroom was without partitions. The third floor was arranged about as the second. Cut through the second and third floors, up near the front of the house, was a round, cased-in hole, in the middle of which was a sturdy eight-inch brass pole or pipe running from the ceiling of the third floor to the concrete of the ground floor. It was worn as smooth as glass. Hearing that this was to enable the firemen to slide down quickly to old Six-A when an alarm came in, Addie demanded that I demonstrate, and she followed, landing on my shoulders, to the utter horror and indignation of Breaksteel, who had to go down two flights of stairs to catch up with us.

By noon Mr. Fippany had in a week's supply

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of feed for Kit and Luce. "Wherever we go," he explained, "we 'll need rations for them. Before it 's gone we may be on the road again, back to Louisiana—hallelujah, amen!"

Mrs. Fippany rested her black eyes on him fixedly for a moment, but said nothing. Indeed, by some miraculous short cut known only to the feminine mind, she had already quietly appropriated the old home of Engine Company 6-A, had begun to arrange its future furniture, had no doubt plotted out the family history for seven or eight years to come. The sacred rights of property receded before her mother's imagination. I noticed that in the afternoon, while Mr. Fippany and I were out buying a lamp and a bushel of coal, she had swept thoroughly the three floors, had cleaned up two bath-rooms, and had taken a dab at three or four of the most strategic windows.

About eight o'clock the long-looked-for and entirely potent figure of Policeman Hibbard slipped through the sliding doors down-stairs. He called out a hearty "Hello" and came on up to the second floor, where we were parked on

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boxes around the stove. It was cold in November and almost impossible to heat the huge unpartitioned room with the one stove, but within a radius of ten feet around it was ample warmth.

"Nobody bothered you, did they?" asked Hibbard confidently, sitting on a spare box and taking Breaksteel between his enormous legs. "I told O'Brien and Alexander, the other two men on the beat, about you; also the captain, who is a good scout. Remember, you are caretakers. It's a bluff. This building belongs to the people of the City of New York, an' it's the business of the said people, or their representatives, to see that you pay rent or get out of here. But nobody has set any rent price. Besides, you could n't stay long enough scarcely to pay rent. Me an' Alexander an' O'Brien are charged with guardin' this property. Well, we are guardin' it: we've put six caretakers over it, countin' in of course this bloodhound here an'—what do you call the mules?—Kit an' Luce.

"But this is not goin' to last. I would n't take this chance only the city is goin' to sell this old buildin' an' a dozen or so others at public

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auction in two weeks. Look in the newspapers; they 'll tell you all about it. Somebody's goin' to buy it; it's got to be sold to the highest bidder. So in two weeks—or sooner if some busybody kicks to the captain or a sergeant—you 'll have to be movin' on. But it 'll give you time to catch your breath an' look around. Gee, but you folks were scared last night. Have you got your spunk up again?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Hibbard," said Addie, looking at him gravely; "we're not afraid any more. Have you any children? And a dog? And some mules?"

"No mules, but two boys an' two girls an' one dog."

"And do they go to school?"

"Sure, the boys an' girls do. An' so will you pretty soon, because in New York they 'll lock you up if you don't go to school."

"Oh, I'm being educated right now by Mr. Jim, and have been all summer, but after a while I'm going to school."

Policeman Hibbard rose to go. "I 'll look in every night or so. Remember, you must be out

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of here in two weeks, an' if anybody comes to look at the buildin' let 'em see it. It's bein' advertised. That's why I had the key. An' you give me that key back if you have to move for any reason before the sale."

"Mr. Hibbard, did you say last night that there were places near here where horses and mules are auctioned off?" asked Mrs. Fippany.

"Yes, down in Eighteenth Street, between Second and Third Avenues, not five minutes away from here, is one place. If you want to sell, go down there; they'll fix you up. Now I'll have to be movin' on."

"Thankin' you just the same," put in Mr. Fippany, "but we don't want to sell."

"Good night, Mr. Hibbard," said Mrs. Fippany sweetly, "and you can never know how grateful we are to you."

Mr. Fippany showed the prodigious Mr. Hibbard down-stairs to the door, and then we heard him in the stalls talking in low tones to Kit and Luce. He stayed down there an hour piddling around and mumbling to himself. "She'd auction *me* off if she had a chance," we heard him

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say. "My team an' me stay or go together; 'at's all I got to say. We'll take to the road again—wish I'd never left it. New Yawk," he went on, caricaturing his wife's small sweet voice, "New Yawk! Well, New Yawk won't get my team away from me. By dogs, it will not, will not. New Yawk be damned an' damned an' damned to hell!"

"Jean, we hear you," called Mrs. Fippany.

He fumbled and mumbled on down there in the semi-darkness with the old lantern, and presently I retired to my private room on the third floor, worried. That highly praised element, cold hard common sense, was on her side, but—well, it did seem rather cold and rather hard.

CHAPTER VIII

—Because Addie Wanted It

THE next morning before the sun had reached Manhattan—it was probably hesitating lovingly over Brooklyn—Mrs. Fippany, Addie, and I were awakened by a good deal of lusty noise on the ground floor. Mr. Fippany was up and at work and happy—at least full of spirit. He was brushing and currying Kit and Luce, humming and whistling as he wielded his tools. Now and then he broke into the higher ranges of song:

“I went up on the mounting:

I give mah horn a blow;

I thought I heard mah true love say,

‘Yonder come mah beau.’ ”

Well, the rest of us had to get up. A man in that mood is irresistible. At breakfast by lamp-light Mr. Fippany was very brisk.

“I ’m goin’ to pick up some teamin’ to-day,”

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he explained. "I 've taken the canvas cover off the wagon; she 's cleared for action. If the prices for teamin' here are like the prices of things I 've had to buy so far, I 'll be in partnerships with John D. an' Diamond Jim Brady before anybody knows it. I may not be back till night. Expect me when you see me."

Mr. Fippany drove out of the big door with a gallant flourish, the nickel and brass of the harness shining and the various doodabs that he had attached to it jingling sharply in the clear cold air.

I should have liked a day with Mr. Fippany driving about New York. I wanted, for one thing, to let him know that I was on his side in the matter of auctioning off his mules. Besides, I suspected that Mrs. Fippany's pressing Gallic practicality was going to call for a conference during which she would ask me what my plans were now that we had achieved our destination. And, alas, I had no plans. I was drifting.

I hurried to take up again what Addie had called, in her innocence, her education. We wrestled with McGuffey's Fourth Reader and re-

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sumed the study of trifling fractions. We did some physical exercises sliding down the brass pole and racing up the stairs. And after lunch—we had already adopted New York's schedule of meals in deference to Mr. Fippany's raid on the teaming business—Addie and I went out on a combined shopping and larking expedition. We got over as far as Madison Square Park and saw St. Gaudens's flying lady, lighter than the air itself, on the top of the Madison Square Garden tower, whereupon the story of Diana was delicately hinted at, was demanded in full and so given, Addie and I sitting close together on a bench in the park and watching the autumn clouds sailing far above even the golden Diana.

Isn't it curious what moments of your long ago memory chooses to keep the brightest? They do not seem at the time to be important, but perhaps in some deep sense they are our great moments.

That night it was after dark when Mr. Fippany drove in. Addie slid down the brass pole, already as expert as a fireman; and I was close behind her. But divining that no luck had come

Because Addie Wanted It

to the teamster, we asked no questions about his day but hurried to tell him what we had been doing. Nor did Mrs. Fippany ask any questions that would hurt him, up-stairs over our dinner of bacon and rice and stewed apples and coffee.

When our dinner things had been cleared away we sat gloomily around the rust-red stove waiting for bedtime. The single small lamp on a box cast a filled-in circle of yellow light around us and the stove, but not nearly touching the walls of the old building. Out there we felt cold and darkness close to us.

Mrs. Fippany, a deliberate person, often looks long and piercingly at one to whom she means, in good time, to say something she considers important; and I had noticed her black eyes scrutinizing me more than once during the day as if she were trying to read what was in my mind. I knew a question was coming. Now it came.

“Mr. Pickett, I suppose now that we have completed the trip you began with us you will be wanting to cut loose from the chicken-wagon family and go about your business. We are in for it; we are going to have hard times, I am afraid.

The Chicken-Wagon Family

You are a university man. You can certainly establish helpful connections here. Your road and ours, maybe, are to be different now. You will always be welcome to whatever we can call a home—if ever we can call anything that—but you must feel free to leave us whenever that suits you best.”

Addie, who stood leaning against her mother, looked hard at me and came silently around the stove and rested her hand with an air of mingled defense and appeal on my right shoulder. Mr. Fippany jumped up, strode over to me, and put his hand firmly on my left shoulder. That was the first time he called me Jim.

“By dogs, Jim and the Fippanys are comrades, Josephine, don’t you understand? We’ve been through things together. He has no other place to go to any more than we have, even if he is a bachelor of arts an’ I don’t know what all else. We’re still in the woods, an’ we’ll stick together until we’re out of the woods; an’ even then maybe we’ll remember that we’re comrades. Jim’s one of the family. Hey, Jim?”

The Chicken-Wagon Family

"Yes, let's stick together," I said. "Besides, Mrs. Fippany, you've been talking all the way up here about starting a boarding-house when and if you arrived. Well, we're here. Let me be the first boarder."

Addie hugged me quickly, Mr. Fippany grabbed my hand, and Breaksteel, seeing that somehow I was the center of interest, put his paws on my knees and began barking ecstatically as if he had something treed.

Well, the next day and all the rest of the week Mr. Fippany drove slowly around New York looking for work that he and his team could do together. He found nothing. I answered newspaper advertisements, and I was no more successful than he. Meanwhile the day of the auction was approaching. Several people had come to look at our building already. We were thus reminded that it was not ours.

Our second week in the old home of Engine Company 6-A was one of deepening gloom for the human adults there. Policeman Hibbard came in to see us every night or so, but he had

The Chicken-Wagon Family

done his best and could do no more. Only Addie and Breaksteel were happy, and they were boundlessly so. Kit and Luce were content.

On the morning of the widely advertised sale of the buildings no longer useful for city purposes, for which the citizenry was invited to bid, Mr. Fippany did not hitch up his team. He and I planned to go down town and see our house sold over our heads. Addie came to the door to tell us good-by.

“And will they sell our house to-day?” she asked Mr. Fippany. I had explained the auction-sale to her and had had her read the newspaper advertisements of it as a relief from McGuffey’s mild narratives and poetry beyond reproach. To get through the tale of 10 per cent on day of purchase, 10 per cent in annual instalments thereafter, with 6 per cent interest on amount left on mortgage, had been strong meat for a Fourth Reader scholar, but she had managed it.

“Yes,” whispered Mr. Fippany so that his wife up-stairs could not hear him, “an’ maybe by

Because 'Addie Wanted It

to-morrow we 'll be on the road again an' out of here forever an' ever, amen!"

He stood looking with wicked brightness at her, working his eyebrows furiously up and down. He thought she would receive that statement with enthusiasm. But her black eyes filled with tears; she dropped her head for a moment, then slipped her right hand into mine.

"Don't let 'em do it, Mr. Jim," she asked in great faith, looking up at me through her eyelashes from a lowered head. "Me and Break-steel like it very much here."

And when that certain parcel of real estate, 50 by 100 feet, and the brick building thereon, 40 by 70 feet, the same being the former home of Engine Company 6-A, came up for sale just before noon, while people were going away for lunch and the auctioneer was in a hurry, I bid it up to \$11,750, no one bid higher, and I made out a check for \$1175 to cover the first instalment, gave the name of Jean Paul Baptiste Yvonne Fippany as the owner, and walked out.

"How much money have you got left in the

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world, Jim?" asked Mr. Fippany as we marched up Fourth Avenue, arm in arm, in the face of an astringent, invigorating November north wind.

"Oh, very little."

"You *are* a damn fool, Jim."

"You are a New York property owner, Mr. Fippany."

"I now owe you \$1175," he went on, turning now and then to work his shaggy eyebrows at me as he studied the side of my face.

"Yes, Mr. Fippany, you do. I will eat it out."

"I said it once, Jim, an' I say it again: you are a double-action, self-cocking, nickel-plated damn fool; an' if bein' a bachelor of arts does that kind of thing to a body I'm glad I'm only a bachelor of the long white road. There's no more chance of me payin' you than there is of me payin' the other nine instalments—which is none."

When we slid back the doors of Six-A House Mr. Fippany shouted up-stairs, "Jim's bought this old buildin'. It's ours. He's got no more sense than a nanny-goat."

Addie slid like lightning down the brass pole,

Because 'Addie Wanted It

laughing and gurgling with delight, and made for me. I stooped to receive her arms around my neck.

“I knew Mr. Jim would n’t let ’em do it—let them do it, I mean.”

And I did n’t, somehow, feel at all foolish.

CHAPTER IX

—*High Contracting Parties*

FOOLISH? Why, if I could see Addie open that door over yonder and come racing across this big, lonesome newspaper room to my desk and feel her put her arms around my neck, and then draw back her head to look at me gravely, as she used to do, and then tighten her arms quickly as if I might get away,—well, I 'd steal a fire-engine house if necessary, and the engine too, for her to play with. If— Oh, God!

I stopped the rattling of my old Remington just then to look at the photographs of her I have in the only drawer of my desk that will lock, and I found one that was taken not long after that. . . . But there, there, suppose the scrub-women should come in suddenly on me. They 'd see my eyes. I think they already have all sorts of suspicions about me because I stay here so late

High Contracting Parties

pecking on my old Remington. . . . We must get on with our story.

In that old fire-engine house—ages and ages ago—we all awoke in a frenzy of excitement the morning after Mr. Fippany had become a New York property owner. The famous Fippany boarding-house, the celebrated Six-A House, one might have thought from the hurry and bustle that morning, was about to throw—or slide—open its doors to remunerative guests. But nothing was there that had n't been there the day before except some chalk-lines on the floors showing where partitions were to be put in, and a touching faith in the god that looks after the children of hope.

Even Mr. Fippany was now converted to his wife's idea. He counted the unborn rooms, assigned unknown and unknowable remunerative guests to their proper places inside the chalk-lines, collected their bills with unheard-of promptness, and made some rapid calculations in his head. He saw the second instalment on Six-A House paid. He saw me repaid for the first. He saw the future opening up and all the instal-

The Chicken-Wagon Family

ments paid. And then Mrs. Fippany—puffing slightly because we had been moving about rather rapidly and had now come back to the stove on the second floor—and then Mrs. Fippany said:

“Yes, but nobody would ever pay to eat and sleep in a house that had a pair of mules quartered on the first floor near the front door. Besides, we’ll need every dollar we can rake and scrape together to make the alterations and put in the furniture.”

“Kit an’ Luce are as nice as any remunerative guest that ever lived,” said Mr. Fippany stoutly, and instantly he lost all interest in the chalk-lines on the floor and went down-stairs to brush and curry the little mouse-colored mules until their hair shone in the broad beam of sunlight that struck in through an east window.

In the afternoon he hitched them up again and drove out in his gallant quest for work that would justify the keeping of his team. And the next day, and the next, and the next, and every day for two weeks.

Mrs. Fippany and I had discovered a carpenter and a plumber. We had had hair-raising

High Contracting Parties

estimates on the alterations. But we had found, on the other hand, an auction-room over on Fourth Avenue where we expected to pick up nearly all the necessary furniture at entirely thrilling prices when we could use it. We had already got three or four beds, some tables and chairs, and a lot of gorgeous—gorgeous is the word—dishes. There was to be a sale every week all winter, we were told.

But poor Mr. Fippany was not interested, and one Sunday night he said: “To-morrow they will be sold. I have arranged it—Kit an’ Luce an’ the wagon an’ everything. I haven’t struck any work. An’ we’ve got this house, so they must go. I reckon, maybe, it’s best after all. Anyway, it’s all arranged now. The fee is paid. They’re in the catalogue, an’ all the rest of the preliminaries are arranged.”

Addie walked around the stove and gave Mr. Fippany a silent reassuring hug, and he presently managed somehow to muster up a whistling tune and went on down to the ground floor. He stayed down there long after the rest of us had gone to bed.

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I wish I were one of those efficient persons who, when they see an undesirable situation forming, calmly and quickly get together the facts, consider them, lay out a course of action, and then immediately do something to meet, or try to meet, the situation. Alas, I am a drifter. I go swimming along lazily with the current, and often I do nothing at all to meet an emergency; and if I do anything I usually do it suddenly, at the last moment, and probably foolishly.

I had seen Mr. Fippany becoming entangled in a situation that was bound to hurt him. Lying in bed that rainy Sunday night, a number of plans that I might at least have tried came to my mind. Why had n't I insisted on going out on the wagon with him? Some promising plan might have occurred to me that had n't occurred to him. Why had n't I written an advertisement for him and put it in the newspaper where most of such wants appeared? At any rate, I might have made it a little easier for him to reach his decision to sell. But, no, though I knew all the time that he was driving surely in the direction of that dreaded auction place on Eighteenth

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Street, yet I had done nothing. I had drifted. He had said we were comrades and would stick together.

And now—well, now he had made his decision, had suffered in advance most of the hurt of it, had made all the cruel arrangements himself.

My bed was up near the circular hole through which the brass sliding-pole ran down to the first floor. The house was all quiet now, and I slid quietly down the pole to be with him. He did not hear me coming, I judged. As my feet touched the concrete I heard him saying: "Good-by, Kit. Good-by, Luce. It's all over; it's all over. No more of the long white road for us together. I did my best, but I'm no good, I reckon. Good-by, my little beasties, good-by!"

Then I could hear nothing more for a few moments except the mules softly snuffling at him. I could see, in my mind's eye, the little man putting his arms around their necks. I heard a rustling in the straw up near the feed-trough.

"Jesus, I come to you at last." Mr. Fippany was whispering hoarsely. "See me here kneelin'

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in Kit's stall prayin' now, only I don't know how. My wife is a member of the Methodist Church in good standin', if that will help any, though she has n't had much chance to go often or regular because we used to move so much. And one of the reasons, Jesus, she wanted to quit the road was so she could attend church every Sunday at least an' take Addie there. Jesus, if the lithographs I have sold by the thousands to the farmers were not damned lies, you yourself was born in a stall, so maybe you won't mind listenin' to me here in Kit's stall to-night.

"I don't ask anything at all for myself, Jesus. Kit an' Luce are as good as gone. That cain't be helped, I reckon, now. But they say you see everything an' can do anything. All I ask is, see that a good man buys my mules, Jesus. Especially Kit. Luce is a pretty tough character herself with her heels and her teeth, an' she can hold her own with nearly anything alive, man or beast; but Kit is sensitive, delicate, high-strung. I never mean to touch her with the whip, but when I do it by accident she jumps as if she had been shot an' looks back at me; then she

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seems hurt for two or three days. A man could hurt her by just yellin' at her. An' she 's a good animal; they're both good. I know; they've been with me a long time. We've been comrades. They've stuck by me. And now we must go different roads.

"So please see that a good man buys Kit, anyhow, Jesus. Maybe the same man will want Luce then, because they're perfect matches in size an' shape. I've been watchin' the kind of men here who drive horses an' mules for the last week. Don't let a fish-peddler get Kit, Jesus, nor a man that keeps his beasties in a cellar under the ground, nor a man that beats his animals or snatches at the lines an' tears their mouths with the bits. But I don't want to be too particular with you, Jesus, an' give orders, so I just say, please, Jesus, make a good man buy Kit—an', if possible, Luce too.

"Jesus, I am a trader born, I reckon; an' if you will do this for me I'll never play another game of poker, which Josephine says is a sin if played for money, though it's no fun at all if not played for money—I'll never play another

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poker game, Jesus, as long as I live. Shucks, Jesus, this ain't no prayer, but I've said it the best I could. Anyway, I'll stick to my word.

"I feel Kit nuzzling at my hair now, Jesus, an' Luce has her head down too over there on the other side of the bars as if she was also tryin' to say something to me. Jesus, give my mules to a good man."

I managed to get back up-stairs without his hearing me.

CHAPTER X

—For Full Value Received

THE Hatcher-Bleecker Auction Stable is a large brick building, painted blue. Blue is for happiness—the happiness of a faithful animal that is old, that is crippled, that is no longer desirable for one reason or another, that is sold in two minutes, often into animal slavery. Work 'em out quick an' buy another cheap one; that is the policy of many of the buyers of these auctioned horses and mules.

Through the building from one street to another is a high, wide opening, and hanging against each of the side walls is a narrow gallery with seats designed for spectators and buyers. But most of the buyers and sellers stay on the ground floor among the horses, near the cage of the auctioneer. Everything goes at lightning speed when the auction has begun.

A stable-boy grabs an animal by the bridle and

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runs him up and down among the crowd, beating his sides to make him step lively. The auctioneer's voice is shouting monotonously: "How much? How much am I offered? Twenty-five? Thirty. Sell 'em as you like. Guaranteed. Alone or with his mate, no difference to me. Forty-five." The seller shouts wildly superfluous compliments about the frightened animal. Buyers yell in derision. "Fifty!"

"Bang!" goes the auctioneer's hammer and a panting animal, white-eyed with fear, has passed to a new owner. And before he is out of the way another is being raced up and down among the hard-faced men.

Into that crowd of yelling men, most of them brandishing old-time buggy-whips, I pushed my way the morning after Mr. Fippany's prayer. I saw him and Addie sitting above in one of the hanging galleries. They had driven over by themselves. He had wanted to come alone, but she insisted on being with him. I was n't supposed to be there. I had not meant to be there.

"Team of mules, good wagon, harness, sell all together," yelled the auctioneer above the shout-

For Full Value Received

ing and cracking of whips. "How much? Twenty-five. Make it thirty, gentlemen. Thirty-five. Forty. Why, gentlemen, I am not sellin' one mule but the pair, an' the wagon an' harness to boot. Sixty. Seventy. Eighty."

Though I am far from gigantic, and would have been hid easily out in the middle of the crowd, I had edged my way over by the side of the auctioneer's cage so that it shielded me from any possibility of being seen by Mr. Fippany and Addie. I did n't, somehow, want him to know that I had witnessed what was now happening. But by looking around the corner of the cage I could easily see both him and Addie.

The stable-boy was banging Kit's side with his fist as he raced her up and down, and every time he hit her I saw Mr. Fippany flinch. Addie was staring down in horror, her eyebrows forming one thick black line across her forehead.

And presently, when the bidding was slowing down, I said, "Two hundred."

A pause. Silence. Bang! went the hammer.

I saw Mr. Fippany resolutely looking at the ceiling, working his shaggy eyebrows swiftly, and

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Addie tightly holding his left arm with both of her hands.

I drove around the streets all afternoon, looking for a teaming job that I could report to Mr. Fippany, and found none. But away down under the Brooklyn Bridge, near the waterfront, I saw a line of wagons unloading bales of old newspapers, lots of brass and copper and iron, and I had an idea.

I had stayed down there watching the wagons and questioning the wholesale and retail junkmen so long that it was after dark when I got back to Six-A House.

I slid back the doors quietly and eased in Kit and Luce and the wagon with as little noise as possible. But I could n't slip in. Addie was sliding down the brass pole, and Mr. Fippany and Breaksteel were leaping madly down the stairs by the time I had closed the doors. Now it was dark down there, and I could see nothing. I heard the little mules snuffling Mr. Fippany in delight.

"Jim!" I heard him whisper.

"Yes."

For Full Value Received

"Papa, where are you?" whispered Addie. "I can't see anything. It's all dark. Mr. Jim, is it really you?"

And then we all came up near the little mules' heads, and I felt Breaksteel winding joyfully through my legs, and there were soft, clinging hands on me. "Why, Jim! Jim!" I heard Mr. Fippany say once or twice; and I took Addie's hand and led her up-stairs, leaving him alone with Kit and Luce.

As I began climbing the stairs I heard him call out in a queer, strained voice that I could hardly recognize as his, "Yes, but there'll be hell to pay up there."

Mrs. Fippany merely looked hard at me a moment as I sat down by the stove, and shook her head slowly several times. I opened my mouth to explain my new plan with reference to the team and Mr. Fippany, but she raised her hand to stop me. "Don't say anything, Jim," she cautioned me gently. "You are not—not very wise."

And that was the first time she called me Jim.

CHAPTER XI

—*The Fippany's Move Up*

LET us proceed by forced marches to a day in April of the following year. The air is soft with the silk of spring, and here and there the trees coming up through the concrete and asphalt are edging the winter blackness of their boughs with faint green as fine as foam. We approach Six-A House. The great sliding doors are still there, but cut through each is a door of family size provided with brass knobs, ancient and unmatched, donated by Mr. Jean Baptiste Paul Yvonne Fippany, now in a business that yields many such utilities and embellishments for the house at no appreciable cost.

Going through one of the family-size doors, we notice at once that the stalls on the right have disappeared. The front section of the ground floor is a lobby, sitting-room, lounging-room, reception-room, what you will, the concrete covered

The Fippanys Move Up

with a huge faded Persian rug, not entirely without holes, which are strategically kept invisible, and provided with the most marvelous assortment of chairs, old, mellow, and soft.

A partition runs across the ground floor, leaving room on the left for a hallway extending to the staircase in the rear. Behind the transverse partition are a kitchen and dining-room, both of rarely generous size, and a small room designed, if all goes well, to take care of a cook. It is eight o'clock in the morning, and there are thirteen at the long table in the dining-room. There would be fourteen if I were there. Ten are remunerative guests—surely we shall not be so coarse as to call them boarders.

On the second floor there are five bedrooms; on the third six. Everywhere are rugs and furniture that have none of the rawness and harshness of the brand-new about them. They seem to have belonged to this old brick building for a quarter-century. Our linen and bedding are new; everything else came from that treasure-house on Fourth Avenue where a handsome young man with an ingratiating voice says over

The Chicken-Wagon Family

and over again, "How much am I offered?" and where all things come to him who waits and at a price that makes the auctioneer seem to chicken-wagon folks a good genius out of a very fine fairy-tale indeed.

At an auction sale of furniture and furnishings the paradoxical rule is, the larger the size the smaller the price. New York continuously moves from private houses with large rooms to private apartments with smaller ones, and the ample old things of yesterday go begging under the red flags of to-day. Well, we of Six-A House have more space than money.

Let us peep into Mrs. Josephine Fippany's room, for instance. Please note that black walnut bed with the four posts and the red silk canopy and the fringes and the tassels and everything. Mrs. Fippany said that it had been so long since she had been able to call a bed her own that now she rather fancied a good deal of a bed. She had it. It cost three dollars and weighed half a ton, the auctioneer having sold it with the emphatic proviso that the buyer get it out of the building, where it was occupying

The Fippany's Move Up

fifty dollars' worth of space, by eleven o'clock the next morning. With the faithful Kit and Luce to call on, that was no trick at all for Mr. Fippany.

Yes, but what of the brass sliding-pole; is it still there? Oh, yes, the hallways on the second and third floors take it in, and you see now a round hall seat on both floors encircles the hole. That protects the remunerative guests from falling through. Besides, Addie would not give up the brass pole. Nor would I.

Although we of the Fippany family are peniless and somewhat in debt, we are not at all cast down. We are rather proud of Six-A House. Our neighborhood is a trifle slummy, but that is a fact which makes for freedom; and our remunerative guests, as would be expected, are mostly mature folks of a certain independence of judgment.

As we pass outside, having slid down the brass pole, we see a gate at the side of the building. Opening that—Six-A House takes up only forty of our fifty feet of frontage, you remember—we go back behind the building, where we had a

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space thirty by fifty feet. Had, I say, for now a large part of it is covered with a frame stable and storehouse, newly built of old boards by certain amateur carpenters of the name of Fippany and Pickett.

The stable door is opened by a little girl with black eyes and hair, and a red-wheeled wagon is driven out, drawn by two spirited little mouse-colored mules with black stripes around their legs, their harness all bright and jingling. Over the wagon-bed are two hickory bows that once helped to uphold a canvas cover, but now they uphold two rows of bells—bells for cows, for calves, for sheep, bells for the smallest of goats.

The man driving pretends not to notice the little girl on the ground and drives on as if he would leave her; but she cries out, and a short-legged beagle hound with black spots on him jumps at the noses of the mules, and they stop. She climbs up on the spring-seat by the small, sturdy man with the great shaggy brown eyebrows, and takes the lines to drive out, while he gets down to open the gate that lets on the street.

The Fippany's Move Up

The little mules go jingling out and stop in front of Six-A House. A portly black-eyed woman, walking unsteadily on her tiny feet, comes out and calls peremptorily: "Addie Amy Fippany, get down from that seat; it's nearly time for you to go to school. You may go driving with your father next Saturday."

And so, having hugged the portly woman and the small sturdy man and the short-legged dog, the little girl takes her bag of scholar's tools and goes off around the corner to Public School No. 50, in Eighteenth Street; and the man waves his hand at the woman, cracks his whip, and drives down the street, his bells calling out of the dim dark places of the houses copper and brass and lead and bundles of newspapers and all those things that junkmen love. You see, Mr. Fippany is bound to have many kinds of bells to call out so many kinds of plunder.

Good day to you, and now I must go back to my rear room on the third floor, where it is most quiet, and finish my sleep. I crept into bed at 4 A. M. this morning and got up only to show you through Six-A House. For you should know

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that I am now a tremendously important—important to myself—cub reporter on the “Transcript,” covering the gayest and wickedest and saddest district in New York City, a fact that explains why I am always up late now. The Tenderloin yawns at 10 P. M. and wakes up at midnight.

CHAPTER XII

—*The Tenderloin Reports*

ONCE a cub reporter and now Old Long Emergency, a position no less humble and neither so adventurous nor so joyous. The little wheel of my newspaper life has gone a full circle, and more. Then the future ran before my eyes a ribbon of road across pleasant plains and over alluring hills. And now the future—alas, I cannot see it. There is no future for Old Long Emergency; only the present and the past. To-day I tolerate, yesterday I enjoy, to-morrow I do not see because I do not look.

Curious to try to recapture the spirit that was in me as a cub reporter on the old "Transcript," I spent part of the afternoon turning over papers in my huge red trunk at Mrs. Ainslie's, and I came upon a letter I had written to Chet Trivers a month after I had achieved the gorgeous heights of the "Transcript" at twenty dollars a week.

The Chicken-Wagon Family

Chet, especially when he was busy, and he was very busy at that time in his new office, often answered my letters by scribbling commentaries and news on the margins of the sheets and on whatever white space was left at the end of the letter and immediately mailing it back to me. That method facilitated a prompt reply at any rate.

My mind is tired to-night, anyway, for I have written a column of assorted obituaries after having dug up enough material in the "Transcript's" "morgue" for six columns. Here goes, then, the old letter:

DEAR CHET:

The inclosed card, just received from a fashionable printer on Third Avenue, patronized by our best butchers and barkeeps, will introduce to you Mr. James Otis Pickett, B. A. ; and the legend on the lower left-hand corner which says, "Reporter, The Morning Transcript," is no exaggeration whatever. New York is a city of continuous gamblers. They gamble with death every time they cross a street down town, every

The Tenderloin Reports

time they take a train at the Brooklyn Bridge during the morning and late afternoon rush hours. They gamble in business even in its smallest details, such, for instance, as hiring a green reporter. I go around for weeks and get nothing. Then one day a mighty city editor, without looking at me, though Heaven knows he has seen me enough already, says, "Show up Monday at 5 P. M." I might be a jail-bird and the man who applied for a job two minutes after I did might be some flaming undiscovered genius. Well, I hope he has a job on one of the other papers by now.

What do I do? I hear you ask that practical question. My dear sir, I rise at high noon. I indulge in a few of those clever gymnastics which you formerly called "piffling monkey-shines." I have lunch, which to me is breakfast, with Mrs. Josephine Fippany and her daughter Addie Amy Fippany, who is in school now and doing great credit to my expert tutoring. And, by the way, this terrible city is certainly agreeing with that child. Whether it is the exercises she does at school, or the playing there, or the better

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food we eat now that we are emancipated from the frying-pan and within reach every day of the year of green vegetables and fresh fruits, or the change of climate, or all of them together, nevertheless those dark brown liver spots are disappearing from her face, and her skinny arms and legs are filling out, and there is just a touch of pink in her cheeks, and her black eyes snap with a new vitality.

We three eat alone. All the real remunerative guests—Mr. Fippany says I am paid up for the rest of my natural life—are too far away to come in for the midday meal.

Smoking a cigar, a fruit of recent affluence, I stroll up Third Avenue, across to Madison Square Park, gaze a while at Diana on the Garden tower—she always lifts me up—and go luxuriously loitering along Broadway until I come to the “Transcript” office.

It is now 2 P. M. I am not supposed to go on duty until 8 P. M., for I am assigned to cover the Tenderloin District, which runs from Fourteenth to Forty-second Street and takes in Broadway and Sixth Avenue. But I am amaz-

The Tenderloin Reports

ingly happy, miraculously healthy, and extraordinarily ambitious. I sit around in the big city room reading the various New York papers, studying comparatively the local news stories that appear in all of them and trying to see wherein one is better than the other, and why. A story in a newspaper office, you must know, Mr. Trivers, is supposed to be, and usually is, I believe, not fiction, but the nearest approximation to the truth it is humanly possible to discover in the brief time available for that purpose.

I listen to the great star reporters talking among themselves, and I try to absorb whatever of wisdom they let fall; but they, alas, talk jolly nonsense mostly, and some of them are no older than I am. I hear the city editor, a tall, middle-aged, distinguished, extraordinarily well dressed, eternally gay man, calling over the star men one by one and telling them to go here, there, and everywhere and "get the facts" about the matters intrusted to them.

Nearly all of the staff men are sent out by three o'clock, a few remaining to rush forth on bulletins about brand-new things that are forever

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“breaking out,” as they say, and of which the city editor hears through an astonishingly complicated and accurate system of news nerves that extend to all parts of the city and the forty-mile district around it.

By four or five o'clock the office is usually fairly clear of staff men, but never yet, darn it, entirely clear. For I am living in the hope that some day, along about four o'clock, Mr. Gleason will get word that something magnificently awful is happening or has just happened, that he will lift his six feet of handsome height erect and swing his humorous gray eyes around the room and see only me.

I live upon the time when he will call me and say, “Get the facts and write the story yourself; never mind your station to-night; we’ll depend on the flimsy.” “Flimsy” is the thin mimeographed copy that comes in from news agencies that cover the city and suburbs, and there is one such agency, the City News Association, which covers the city somewhat as the Associated Press (familiarily called A. P.) covers the world. But

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a first-class New York paper wants the more important things covered by its own men and uses the "flimsy" primarily for tips and as copy only in emergency or to cover the smaller stories.

But so far Mr. Gleason has seen a real reporter every time he has stood up and looked around. I read and read, and listen and listen. I write a C. G. O. and deprecatingly drop it on Mr. Gleason's desk. C. G. O., Mr. Chet Trivers, is short for Can Go Over, and it means a story that is used to fill a hole between honest-to-goodness news and advertisements, most of them being pulled out of the second and third editions to make room for late news. Their substance is something a reporter has seen, frequently an incident that he thinks humorous or pathetic, or something having the color of interest or importance which he has dug out of consular reports or other documents. "C. G. O." written on the corner of a story is notice to the make-up man in the composing-room that it is n't genuine, A-1, guaranteed news and can go over into the future if not needed to fill a hole. Up to date all

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my C. G. O.'s have gone so far into the future that I shall never see them in print if I live to be a thousand years old.

After five o'clock most of the space men out on assignments are coming in or telephoning in to report what stunning things they have discovered and what large amounts of space (at seven dollars a column for them) they need in order to do even the faintest justice to the thrilling facts. Mr. Gleason listens, smiles, and asks, "How much do you need?" And then he tells them how much they can have: to this man it is more than he asked for, to that one less than half, to another a mere fraction. I may already be an idolater, but I think he is as wise as Solomon in his line.

After that he gives out to reporters the evening assignments—dinners, lectures, meetings of all sorts, a death-watch over a prominent citizen, etc., etc.—turns over to the night city editor, who has just come in, the schedule of things to be written and already written, and goes home. The night city editor sits at the head of a large desk with six copy-readers about him. As a story is put on

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his desk he skims it through, scribbles on the corner of the first page the kind of heading that is to be put on it, and tosses it to a copy-reader, not infrequently, alas, with the comment, "It's over-written; cut the hell out of it."

Mr. Trivers, as you love an English instructor who is insistent about long tails on commas, so a space reporter loves a copy-reader. But not for the same reason: Mr. Bimber wanted you to add something; a copy-reader's creed is to cut out. To a space reporter a copy-reader is a man strangely free of the restraints of a lunatic asylum and filled with malice toward all reporters and especially toward him. As a matter of fact, I gather that virtually every copy-reader is an ex-reporter who has lost his early illusions but is secretly planning to make a killing in Wall Street, or retire to a farm in the deep woods, or write a thundering big play or novel—some day. Two or three of our copy-readers have already taken me aside and told me solemnly to flee from the newspaper business as from the plague. "There's nothing in it but disappointment," they say. "The paper will squeeze the juice out of

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you and then make a copy-reader of you—or something just as bad.”

The copy-reader's job is a tremendously important one, nevertheless, although he is ill paid, getting less than a bright young space reporter. He edits what has been written, taking out thousands of things that would mean multitudes of damage-suits for his paper, taking out padding that would bore readers and so lose circulation and so damage advertising revenues, sometimes cutting two columns to half a column of fragments and then weaving them together into a continuous, rapidly moving story that is itself a creation.

But to the space reporter the copy-reader is a fiend who, concealing his insanity, cuts and butchers his story in a way that is n't but ought to be criminal, taking out all the humour, all the pathos, all the poetry, all the color and feeling, all the most striking and dramatic elements, all the brilliant descriptions, everything indeed that a sane copy-reader not only would have left in a story but would have taken pains to compliment the reporter on having put there.

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Well, Chet, the copy-readers don't worry me. Whatever I get in my Sodom and Gomorrah, which is the Tenderloin, I telephone to some one in the office, who does the writing.

I leave the office late in the afternoon, go to Six-A House for dinner, and get over to the Thirtieth Street Police Station well before eight o'clock. And that is my headquarters until 3 A. M., when the last edition has been run off and the paper put to bed. Then I walk home.

Usually the streets are fairly quiet by then, the east-and-west cross streets especially so, and I hear my heels pounding on the pavement. The further from Broadway I get the dimmer and stiller the city is, and by the time I near Six-A House a tomcat yowling on the curb is a terribly smashing sound.

I creep as noiselessly as I can into the dining-room, turn on the light, and sit down to the things Mrs. Fippany has left out for me.

More often than not I hear a slight fluttering outside the dining-room door, which I leave

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open, and I see a little white figure sliding down the brass pole I have told you about. It is that adorable Fippany child. She comes tiptoeing in, her fingers to her lips, her tiny red slippers flashing from beneath the white hem of her nightgown. The light blinds her for a moment, and she puts the back of her hand to her forehead for protection. Then she gets in a chair by my side, pulls her knees up to her chin, and prepares to be sociable in dreadful whispers. Having covered her warmly with my overcoat, I await the cross-examination.

“Are you all right, Mr. Jim?” she whispers fearfully. That is always her first question, asked while she scrutinizes my face for possible bruises and blood-stains. At school and from the remunerative guests she has gathered the impression that the Tenderloin is, as she says, “a terribul, terribul place.” It is, but not in the way she thinks, bless her heart. I reassure her as to my physical well-being. Then she asks about my professional well-being.

“And did you get any stories to-night? Tell

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me what you got. I will read your stories in the paper while you are deep down in sleep away up there on the third floor in the morning. Here, give me the paper; I promise not to read till morning."

The remunerative guests and Mr. Fippany, Mrs. Fippany silently disapproving, have begun to tease Addie about her gentleman friend in the newspaper business. It is a joke to them, but not to her. She gravely accepts the implied impeachment without comment to them. Heaven only knows what all goes on in the mind of an eleven-year-old girl, but the stream of thought that runs behind Addie's black eyes is something always clear and fine, and always will be. At present she is mothering me; I am to be looked after seriously, as Breaksteel is looked after, and as the collection of tramp city pigeons she has induced to come to a box on the roof to be fed and warmly housed at night.

When I have finished I pick her up, overcoat and all, tiptoe up-stairs to the door of her small room adjoining that of her parents, let her down,

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and unwrap her. She stands looking up at me for a moment from under her eyebrows, suddenly smiles, squeezes my hand, forms her lips into the words, "Good night, Mr. Jim," and is gone.

Yours in the faith,

JIM

CHAPTER XIII

—*The Great Bath-Tub Coup*

WE come now to the great bath-tub coup executed by the daring Mr. Fippany, junkman extraordinary, self-pledged not to play poker, but free to take chances in business. Here goes Mr. Fippany driving the most distinguished junk-wagon in New York up Second Avenue on a day in June. It is early in the morning, and after the week of sultry hot weather and then the rain last night the air has a sudden sharpness, and things—all things from a tan-tinted tower thirty stories high to a red geranium in a second-floor tenement window—now seem closer and their outlines have an amazing new clearness and their colors a stimulating vividness. Sounds too go further, so that when an elevated train is not thundering above him Mr. Fippany's swinging bells carry his message to more houses than he has been able to reach in many days.

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Therefore Mr. Fippany's business in old brass and copper and other things close to the junkman's heart is more than good during the morning. But despite the great white day, despite his morning's work, Mr. Fippany is not glad, not even content.

It is not enough that he drives two dapper little mules instead of a single melancholy horse, as other junkmen do; not enough that his wagon with its red wheels newly painted and its green bed newly painted puts to shame every other junk-wagon he has seen in the city; nor that he carries more bells and more kinds of bells than any three competitors. And though he, with the assistance of Mrs. Fippany's remunerative guests, has met two instalments on Six-A House and met also the unexpected taxes, which he had not thought of until the bill came, and which he called outrageous and a sin, he has not seriously outdistanced expenses. And there are seven more instalments to come. And he has a growing daughter, a daughter developing at a rate entirely wonderful and altogether terrifying, considering Mrs. Fippany's plans for her.

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Therefore you cannot expect Mr. Fippany's mind to be as contented and as sluggish as that of, say, Breaksteel, who lies on the seat by him. Breaksteel, now an adult according to dog standards, is stirred into action only when Mr. Fippany disappears into a basement to make a trade, whereupon he sits erect in the seat and barks ferociously at all who come too near the precious cargo left in his care; but when Mr. Fippany returns and climbs over the right front wheel, Breaksteel relaxes and sleeps and dreams mightily.

No, as he drives about the streets these days, Mr. Fippany's bright brown eyes under their thicket of eyebrows are roving about anxiously and his mind weaving and weaving around the problem of how to improve faster, much faster, his condition.

Along about two o'clock that afternoon—Mr. Fippany has often rehearsed dramatically every detail of that day to me—in Forty-second Street, near Fifth Avenue, he sees undoubted preparations beginning to wreck a splendid ten-story hotel, the land under which has become too

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valuable to serve as the seat of a mere ten stories. New York grows too fast to wear out its clothes before getting new ones, and buildings barely old enough to be well settled on their foundations must be torn down to make room for taller and yet taller ones to keep pace with the rising values of the land beneath them.

Mr. Fippany, looking at a gang of Italians erecting a thick-planked structure over the sidewalk to protect pedestrians from the débris of the dismantlement, suddenly sits up straight, inspired, and instantly drives his wagon around into the comparative quiet of Forty-first Street. Coming back, he penetrates the hotel, asks for the wrecking-boss, is directed by him to the man who has bought the entire contents of the hotel, and discusses the matter of bidding on 317 bathtubs and their fittings. And then he does bid on them, five dollars apiece, gets an acceptance, writes his check grandly for one third of the amount as a deposit, and running to his wagon drives to Six-A House in a gallop.

Dropping the lines across the mules, he jerks open one of the smaller doors and goes bounding

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up the stairs. The house is quiet, only Mrs. Fippany being there, and she asleep in a huge, deep, soft chair. And that tired woman, busy every other minute of the day except this middle period of the afternoon, is so very deep in sleep that Mr. Fippany's hurried steps do not awaken her. As he strides with a swagger into her room he sees her in the chair, her hands folded in her lap, her head sunk forward on her ample bosom.

It does not occur to Mr. Fippany that his news may wait an hour or so: bath-tubs are not perishable. He shakes her shoulder violently.

"Josephine! Josephine! Wake up! I've bought three hundred an' seventeen bath-tubs." Mr. Fippany shouts it. "Three hundred an' seventeen of the finest bath-tubs in New York—an' all their fittin's an'—an' for five dollars apiece. What do you think of that now?"

Mrs. Fippany lifts her head, her eyelids flutter, her eyes open, and she sees Mr. Fippany's face close to hers, his shaggy eyebrows working up and down wickedly as he gazes piercingly at her. She utters a tiny scream, puts both hands

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quickly to her heart, and begins gasping for breath. Only then does Mr. Fippany remember that his wife is growing stout rapidly and that Dr. McLemore has said her heart is not any too strong.

"It 's all right, Josephine; it 's all right," he whispers soothingly, patting both her shoulders. "Nothin' wrong at all. Just a few old bath-tubs, anyhow."

But she knows his coming home so early indicates that something unusual has happened. She gradually pulls herself together and receives the full details of Mr. Fippany's confession.

"But, Jean, who will buy the tubs from us?"

"I don't know yet. We must find 'em."

"Them? Are you going to try to sell them one by one?"

"I am. The buildin' season has just opened. All out there in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Westchester, New Jersey, thousands of new small houses are goin' up. They will need my bath-tubs. They are bargains at twenty-five dollars apiece. I bought 'em for five dollars. It 's a gamble. But people will go a long way for a bargain if they

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know about it. Things are movin' too slow for me. I took a chance."

"But where will you put three hundred and seventeen bath-tubs, Jean, while we 're waiting for people to find out that they are bargains and that we have them?"

"I don't know—yet."

"How will all these people you talk about find out we've got these marvelous bargain bath-tubs?"

"I don't know—yet."

"Fifteen hundred and eighty-five dollars is over two hundred dollars more than we've got in the whole world, Jean. Where is the rest of the money to come from? And the next instalment on the house is due in November, and the interest, and the taxes. Oh, Jean, have you spoiled everything? You frighten me. We were getting along."

"Too slow! Too slow! Now, now, Josephine, don't cry; it'll be all right. You'll see."

But that night when I am home for dinner Mr. Fippany persuades me to telephone the office and ask for a night off. I am now a full-fledged

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space man myself with no other assignment than to return to the office for occasional short emergency duty. He and I retire to the quiet of my third-floor rear room. Mr. Fippany admits considerable worry.

"A big thing, though, Jim, if I can manage it. I don't know what the next draw is goin' to be; will I make a full house or pull blanks? Nobody knows. It's a gamble, but it's started. I've got to play through."

Well, as for me, I am not merely worried, I am frightened almost speechless. I see Six-A House taken from us. I see our laboriously and lovingly collected household goods going once more under the red flag. I see us once again on the road, Mrs. Fippany a broken-spirited woman, Addie a child of the woods. For me perhaps, as I now see things, maybe that would have been better—but, there, there, never mind that.

Mr. Fippany and I are both desperate. We sit up until 3 A. M. smoking and talking. The problem is to find buyers for 317 bath-tubs, and find them quickly; we must not pay storage

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charges. Assuming that there are of course many times 317 people near-by willing to get these bargains, how are they to be told what awaits them. Newspapers are appearing twice a day, and they are read by thousands. But advertising is expensive, and we do not know how to go about doing it. Very well, granted, says Mr. Fippany; then we must find out how to do advertising, and we must gamble some more money. He looks straight at me. "That is where you come in, Jim," he says, grinning. "You are to do this, now, advertisin'; an' furthermore, Jim, you 've got to advance the money to pay for it."

It is now Tuesday morning. On Wednesday morning a quarter-page advertisement appears in two morning papers saying that 317 luxurious bath-tubs, as good as new, as they actually are, with all their fittings, from the famous Hotel Prince William, have been bought and must be sold at a sacrifice, *at once*, etc., etc. Delivered within a radius of thirty miles of New York without charge. Twenty-five dollars each. Samples on exhibition in the lobby of the Hotel Prince William for one week only, where all sales will

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be made. Sale closes within one week. Delivery begins immediately after the conclusion of the sale.

Well, the advertisements find the people who want Mr. Fippany's bath-tubs. They fight to buy them. They halt traffic in Forty-second Street for ten minutes and make necessary the calling out of police reserves to herd them into line while they pay in their money to Mr. Fippany, Mrs. Fippany, and myself. Within ten days the whole transaction is cleared up. Mrs. Fippany is on the verge of nervous prostration. But there is in the bank all that was there before the bath-tub coup and something more than five thousand dollars in addition.

CHAPTER XIV

—*Mr. Fippany's Stock Rises*

MR. Fippany's great bath-tub coup made no tremendous difference, at the time, in our manner of life at Six-A House, though there were some readjustments of values. Back on the sandy-land roads of Arkansas, Louisiana, and north-east Texas a windfall of five thousand dollars would have revolutionized the condition of the chicken-wagon family, but we had already geared our ideas somewhat to New York, where that amount was insignificant even then.

There was a readjustment in the attitude of the remunerative guests toward Mr. Jean Paul Baptiste Yvonne Fippany. They had patronized him as a junkman, and they had a notion that he was contributing little or nothing to the Fippany treasure-chest. They patronized him no more; they were something more than respectful toward the small, tempestuous, robust, adven-

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turous capitalist, who took on an exaggerated swagger for a few weeks and then forgot it.

Possibly the remunerative guests at Six-A House may be considered as worldly failures. They were of mature years in most cases, the men in low-salaried positions, willing to face the possibility of years in a boarding-house if only they could remain in New York. And indeed they did as well as, and in some cases surely better than, they could have done elsewhere; and all the time were undoubtedly happier for living in the city of their choice.

Moreover, all of them had hopes of better things to come; there was room for hope. They had something staked out in the future; there was stimulation in the expectation, however vague and ill founded, of something comparatively splendid approaching. It would have taken a small fleet of ships to bring home their hopes. Most of them had plans that needed, they were confident, only the fertilization of capital to make them produce gorgeously. About me they had built up a legend of great wealth, believing, possibly because I was unusually quiet and so

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gave their imaginations full play, that I had inherited vast acreages of land and huge quantities of money; and just as previously they had sounded me as a possible capitalist partner, so now they considered seriously Mr. Fippany's sudden access of money. They had given me up, having decided that I meant to buy part interest in a newspaper shortly.

There was old Major Tarleton Rossmore; Maje the boys called him in the basement office of the Atlantic-Pacific Railway Company, where he worked fifteen feet below the level of Broadway. He was almost sixty and as jolly and gay and irresponsible as the boys who were his companions all day and his business peers. He was always impressively dressed in striped trousers and black cutaway coat with a white Woolworth gardenia in the left lapel of his coat. His salary as checking-clerk was twenty dollars a week and had been that for ten years, though he had a small income in addition from an inherited farm in Maryland, where he and Mrs. Rossmore spent their vacation each summer. He was a perfect husband to the little gray lady, who apparently

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needed nothing more than his unwavering devotion to complete her happiness. She and he knew and enjoyed every form of free entertainment in New York—the lectures at the public school buildings and the museums, the free days at the Zoo, the free music in the parks, and so on and on; New York overflows with free entertainment.

The Maje approached Mr. Fippany with reference to a partnership which should establish a stationery store in an ideal location he had long had under his eye.

Philippe Hennepin, a brown, bitter, bilious, thin man, who spent his days in a Water Street warehouse tasting coffee, and whose clothes always had about them the alluring aroma of freshly roasted coffee, suggested that Fippany & Hennepin would become rich through a saloon in Prince Street that to his certain knowledge could be bought at a bargain, the owner being fatigued and ready to retire.

Mr. and Mrs. Seumas O'Shea for years had been doing a vaudeville sketch in New York and its suburbs, the same being a mock quarrel and

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succeeding fight rich with brogue, at the end of which the darling old lady, as I then thought her, though she was probably a little more than forty, threw exactly eighty-nine cents' worth of crockery at his head—and always regretted keenly the wasting of the dishes. Mrs. O'Shea made advances to Mr. Fippany looking toward the formation of a stock company to present legitimate plays in a growing section of Brooklyn.

As for herself, she did not mind the vaudeville; it was all nonsense, she said, and she never could understand how it was that unending thousands paid money to see Mr. O'Shea and herself fuss and fight. But Seumas would be nervous and unsatisfied and irritable in his very grave if he did not some day play a serious and even a tragic part on the legitimate stage.

Cecil Rockefeller, a pale, snobbish, acidulated, young-old man who was not related to the rich Rockefellers but who felt that destiny had tricked him in not permitting him to become wealthy, threw out some hints in a conversation with Mr. Fippany about a small private bank in a section thickly settled with Italians. He was a bank

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clerk, at twenty-five dollars a week, and knew the business, he declared. He thought that Rockefeller & Fippany on the front window of a private bank would work wonders. All you had to do was to put a swell front on a hole in the wall and then take the Wops' money.

Miss Minnie Febber made no immediate financial proposals to Mr. Fippany, but he had now captured her interest. She was the youngest of the remunerative guests, though probably not less than twenty-six, and she was their standard-bearer of beauty. Miss Febber's face was modeled somewhat after that of the hawk, though her hair and eyes were pale. Below her chin, however, the gods had performed wonders. Her figure, which whispered frankly through her clothes, was a gracious compact of firm white flesh, symmetry, balance, proportion, fire—and her legs glorified silk stockings. She was amiable, spirited, gay, and dressed extremely well.

Miss Febber was employed by a Fourth Avenue silk company, nominally as a relief telephone operator but really to be used as the inside of silk stockings, camisoles, and I really don't know

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what all else—although I have been authoritatively informed—which were photographed for advertising purposes. Heretofore Miss Febber had virtually ignored Mr. Fippany. Now she studied him quietly.

But those paying guests who had envisioned themselves using the financial results of the bathtub coup as fertilizer for their dear secret business plans were wasting their vitality. Mrs. Josephine Fippany, partly to bring the ownership of Six-A House nearer, partly to restrain Mr. Fippany's gambling instincts, had at once insisted that every dollar in the bank be used to pay six instalments on the house, thus saving considerable interest and gaining for herself some added sense of security.

Under protest she yielded to the suggestion that she advertise for a cook. That is how we came by Li Teo Po, tall for a Chinaman but slightly stooped, thin, light yellow in color, of an age that might have been forty or eighty, silent, swift, always smiling, faithful, tireless, who knocked off work after dinner on Sunday and spent most of his week's wages in a Mott Street

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gambling-house by 2 A. M. the next morning, and to whom Miss Laddie was a being to watch over and worship. His sense of the comic was as swift as radio, and absolutely fair. He laughed at himself even.

As for Mr. Fippany, he drove forth as usual of a morning to jingle about in his territory, collecting ancient treasures of brass and lead and all those other things that may justly be labeled "et cetera." But Mr. Fippany went out now more to look about and think than anything else. He had discovered a bigger thrill than he had ever got out of poker; and sometimes, as he had found, behind the thrill there were sudden heavy falls of money all about one's ears.

He told me what was in his mind; but though he never breathed a word of it to Mrs. Fippany there was a fear in her every afternoon when she took her nap that she might be waked up suddenly by Mr. Fippany shouting that he had just bought eleven hundred yards of carpeting, or two thousand single beds, or five hundred electric-light bulbs, all at once and as good as new.

CHAPTER XV

—But It's Real To Addie

THE streets were white with new snow that night in November when I approached Six-A House and saw a light in Mrs. Fippany's room on the second floor. It was about four o'clock in the morning, but thinking it was nothing more than one of those temporary flashings of light in the dark that go with people in houses I paid no attention to it. It would be out in a minute.

I remember I stood for several minutes at the outside door drawing down deep drafts of bracing air into my lungs and looking up at the blue stars glittering in a sky now almost cloudless. The summer had been unusually hot and heavy; now the dry icy air and the blue stars gratified keenly some need in me, and I waited to get from them all the tonic coldness I could. Reluctantly opening one of the outside doors, I slipped in and tiptoed to the dining-room.

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The hour of my coming home now varied; often I was in by midnight, though sometimes a late assignment kept me as far into the morning as in the days, two years before, when I was detailed to cover the "terribul" Tenderloin district. I had tried to persuade Mrs. Fippany not to have anything set out for my late supper, and for a while I purposely did not eat it, but as it was always there nevertheless I finally gave up and went back to my old habit of eating at home no matter when I came in. Li Teo Po would have been cut to the heart, I think, if I had not eaten.

I had just sat down to the table when I felt, rather than saw, the white-clad figure of Addie passing into the door. I pretended not to know that she was there. She did not slide into the chair next to mine with a chuckling gurgle and then pinch my arm as she usually did when I play-acted deep thinking. I felt her leaning on my shoulder, her body shaking, and presently I heard her catch her breath. I looked around quickly into her wet black eyes red-rimmed with weeping. I wrapped her up instantly and made

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her sit in a chair with her feet drawn up inside the coat.

"Mama's very, very sick," she whispered.

"Has she had Dr. McLemore?"

"Oh, yes, he was here and stayed a long time, but he had to go away about midnight. Papa's gone to Bellevue Hospital—it's close by, you know, Mr. Jim—to get another doctor because Dr. McLemore had n't come back home. Papa telephoned his house. Papa telephoned another doctor, too, and he promised to come right away, but he went back to sleep, I reckon; anyway, he did n't come. So papa said he would go over to Bellevue and get one if he had to bring him here in front of his pistol."

"What did Dr. McLemore say was the matter?"

"Something about the stomach and intestines—I don't know. She just sits in the bed and rocks from one side to the other. Li Teo Po is with her now. The way she looks—so strange out of her eyes, and they so big and black, and her black hair all down over her shoulders—makes me cry, Mr. Jim. Could n't you do something for mama, Mr. Jim? I am afraid."

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Snapping out the light and holding her hand in the dark, I led her up-stairs into the sick-room. There was a candle on a small table by the great canopied bed, its pointed yellow flame waving wildly in the draft from an opened crack under a window. Li Teo Po sat at the foot of the bed, a yellow graven image. And in all the corners of the big room were dark shadows.

Addie and I walked to the side of the bed, holding hands, and when Mrs. Fippany saw us some new sudden thought passing behind her black eyes brightened them for a second; then she stared dully in front of her again and began gently rocking from side to side.

"He will be back soon, Mrs. Fippany," I whispered, "and everything will be all right."

She shook her head slowly and went on rocking as if that gave her some relief.

And then she stopped, sat up straight, looked sharply at me.

"I would n't mind if it were n't for Addie," she said in her small sweet voice, now strained to a high shrill note, though she was trying desperately to whisper. The still house and, out-

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side, the stilled city seemed to impose themselves on all of us. "All I 've thought and planned and worked for, it is for her. And now—I don't know, I don't know. Six more years, if I had only six more years. Now nothing is settled. She would drift. Nothing is settled."

"You 're going to be all right, Mrs. Fippany," I went on with the customary patter of well-meaning sick-bed nonsense. I knew nothing about the case. "So will Addie. Mr. Fippany and I—"

She shook her head violently and held up her hand in her impatient, imperious way to stop me.

"Nothing settled yet. I drift out and leave *her* adrift. And I have worked so hard, so hard—and nothing settled, nothing at all. They talk about an operation. Appendicitis. They're afraid. Heart not too strong. If I do not get better by morning, it 'must be anyway. And nothing settled. Better maybe if we were still on the roads of Louisiana."

She looked at Addie and me for a full minute. Then she leaned toward us. "Jim, you will look after Addie if—"

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"Oh, yes, Mrs. Fippany, you know that. All of us will."

"No, no, you must promise for yourself. None can promise for another. Oh, I wonder if you would do something. I wonder if you would. Then the hospital could come or anything, and I should n't care. I wonder . . ."

"Wonder what, Mrs. Fippany? I will do whatever you wish if I can."

She held the fingers of her left hand hard against her lips as if she were trying to think out something difficult, as if she were trying to catch something that eluded her. Her face twisted with sudden agony, and she began searching for something on the table by the bed. I caught up a bottle there, and seeing that it was spirits of ammonia, gave her a few drops in water.

"Jim, Jim," she said faintly, "you must not refuse me this. Addie, put your right hand in Jim's. Now put your other hand over his and hold it hard. Jim, do you take her as your wife? I know you, Jim. I trust you. Among all the whirling things in my mind you are fixed. I am selfish, selfish, I know; for her I am selfish.

But It's Real To Addie

But she will be a great wife. She will be beautiful. Oh, I know, I know. I see what is coming. She will be beautiful. And you know she is brave and honest and loyal. You will be proud of her. Later on—I can trust you, Jim—in the regular way with a preacher, and all that. But now here, before God, who is near, do you take her as your wife, Jim?”

“Mrs. Fippany! It’s not fair to Addie.”

Her head sank upon her breast as if I had taken away all her strength, her shoulders sagged, she closed her eyes, she sighed as if it were her last breath. The draft pushed in the white window-curtains and shook them flutteringly. I looked down at Addie, who was holding out her right hand to me. Li Teo Po sat staring at us.

“Mrs. Fippany, listen—I say yes, yes a thousand times, and I shall give her my life if necessary. Do you hear me, Mrs. Fippany? Yes, yes, yes!”

She lifted her head. “Addie, give him your hand and hold his tight. Do you take him as your husband, Addie?”

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"Oh, yes, mama."

Mrs. Fippany drew in a deep breath and sighed. "Thank God, she is taken care of, whatever comes. You—you *are* good, Jim."

And then we heard the outside door down-stairs open.

"Tell nobody anything yet," Mrs. Fippany whispered suddenly. "The child can hold her tongue."

Mr. Fippany, white with fear, came in with a wide-awake, impressive young interne from Bellevue Hospital. He motioned all of us out of the room except Mr. Fippany.

Li Teo Po slipped noiselessly down-stairs, and I tiptoed up-stairs with Addie to wait for news. Presently Mr. Fippany came silently in, his face hopeful.

"For some reason or other she is now willin' to go to the hospital," he said. "Dr. McLemore thought early in the night that she ought to go at once, but she appeared to be so worried about somethin' that she would n't say yes or no. Then the doctor said she might wait until mornin'. Now this doctor says she must go in the mornin'."

But It's Real To Addie

whether or no, an' that she may have to go any minute. He will stay on watch until eight o'clock. She is a little easier than she has been.

"As for us, we're to go to bed an' be quiet, the doctor says. Come, Addie, we must get you back to your little room. An' I must stay in there too. I will make a pallet on the floor by your bed. It's a long time since I've slept on a pallet. It'll make me dream of the old days in the pine woods if I ever get off to sleep."

A wan smile struggled across his haggard face. Addie stood up and raised her black eyes to me inquiringly.

"Good night, Addie," I said, leaning over for her to kiss me.

"Good night, Jim," she said.

"Where's the 'Mister' gone that used to be in front of Jim's name?" asked Mr. Fippany.

"It's gone," said Addie.

At the door she stopped, walked quickly back, held out her arms again, and whispered in my ear, "Good night, dear, my husband."

CHAPTER XVI

—An Inquiry About A Ring

AT eight o'clock that morning an ambulance from Bellevue Hospital rolled up to Six-A House, and by ten o'clock Mrs. Fippany lay in a room there, the operation over, still under the influence of ether. Mr. Fippany, Addie, and I sat in a waiting-room, among a number of other people, most of them as frightened as we, anxiously watching the clock. Breaksteel sat subdued at Addie's feet suffering under the indignity of a string around his neck. Our patient was to come from under the ether some time between ten and eleven o'clock if all went well. Every now and then Mr. Fippany, against all rules and regulations, would jump up, hurry through the corridors to Mrs. Fippany's room, and stand just inside the door staring at his wife's white still face. The nurse in attendance would rush at him and drive him out.

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"Is she breathin' all right?" Mr. Fippany would demand, focusing her with his eyebrows. "All I 'm afraid of now is her heart."

"Yes, she is. She is doing as well as could be expected. But you must stay out until we say you can come in."

"Will you send word? You won't forget?"

"Yes, yes; go now. When she comes from under the ether she will be very sick. She will vomit. She will be dazed. She will be very sick indeed for a while. But when she is conscious and has recovered herself a little I will send for you. Go now. The danger is not over. You are not doing her any good staying here."

Mr. Fippany came back and sat down, but after a while he could keep his seat no longer. He strode back and forth in the waiting-room, stopping frequently to scrutinize a dim picture on the wall as if he were a connoisseur; and probably he did not even see the picture. At intervals of three minutes he leaned over me and whispered intently, as if he had not already said it fifty times, "Jim, I 'm afraid of her heart."

But by noon we stood by Mrs. Fippany's bed.

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Her face was pinched and white, and her always small voice came as a tiny, incredibly sweet whisper from a distance. Mr. Fippany frequently looked hard at the ceiling and worked his eyebrows; but Addie knelt down and laid her head against the edge of the bed and gave herself up to the great relief of tears.

"Why, Addie, child, the danger is all over now—almost."

"Yes 'm, I know it is. But I can't help it somehow—doing this, I mean."

"There, there, we 'll all be together in Six-A House soon now. And, Jean, you too! You still love your old Josephine, don't you?" She reached out and squeezed Mr. Fippany's hand. "And Jim too! What would the Fippanys do without Jim? So we 're all here."

"Look, mama, you have n't seen Breaksteel," broke in Addie eagerly, blinking her eyes rapidly to dry her tears and lifting up Breaksteel so that he could be seen. "He 's crying too, but you know you can't see dogs crying. They cry inside, I reckon."

Mr. Fippany laughed as loudly as his con-

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sciousness of the hospital permitted, and the nurse who was vigilant at the door charged in, calling out, "Don't let that dog touch anything about the bed. How did that dog get in here, anyhow? The gateman should have kept him out there. I'll report him." She acted as if poor Breaksteel were thirty pounds of solid poison.

And then we were firmly ushered out, Addie flashing her eyes at the tall, rosy, masterful nurse.

Late in the afternoon we made another visit and received the exciting news that Mrs. Fippany was virtually out of danger and on the way to recovery. She would in all probability be back home within two weeks.

And if you had been on that stretch of Second Avenue between Twenty-sixth and Forty-second Streets that cold, cloudy November afternoon, on the eastern side, coming south, you would probably have collided with one medium-sized man, one slightly less than medium-sized man, and one slightly more than medium-sized little girl wearing a red artist's tam on one side of her black head, linked arm in arm, swaggering northward as wild with joy as three people could be. But

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then maybe Breaksteel, who ran barking ahead of us as a sort of herald or outrider or something tremendously important and picturesque, would have warned you of our coming, so that you could make room for us.

We marched up Second Avenue and we marched down Lexington, our heels pounding the pavement with the emphasis of our high spirits. Mr. Fippany recalled miracles and heroic deeds of Josephine in the old days on the road—or so they seemed to him at the moment—and was outspoken and eloquent in his opinion that she was the wisest and most entirely admirable woman alive at the time. “An’, Jim, you should have seen her when she was eighteen!” As for him, he owed everything that he was or could be to Josephine. And so, appropriately, he sang, “I went up on the mounting,” etc., etc., until a policeman, looking hard at us, shouted, “Easy, lads; it ain’t Christmas yet.”

Presently coming to our street, we turned west and halted in front of Six-A House. It was already dimming into the gray dusk, and we

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stopped to watch the city hang up its spangled curtain of light against the coming of the night.

"Oh, papa and Jim, let's not go in yet," pleaded Addie.

"We will not," said I.

"Right!" shouted Mr. Fippany, "we will not think of it. I'll call to old Li to feed an' water Kit and Luce. Then we'll march on."

So we notified Li Teo Po of our intentions, telling him that we should not be back to dinner, and to inform the remunerative guests that Mrs. Fippany was doing splendidly and was out of danger. We marched on down Third Avenue and west on Fourteenth Street, hesitating in front of Lüchow's old restaurant, then in its great days.

"Can we afford it?" asked Mr. Fippany.

"We can," I said.

"Hooray, I'll have oysters," shouted Addie, jumping up and down. "And chicken and ice-cream, and little cakes."

"An' I'll have oysters, too," said Mr. Fippany, "an' sirloin steak with mushrooms an' French fried potatoes an' a big glass of that very dark

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beer with a name I cain't say but can point at on the menu-card, an' a little cup of black coffee."

"Very good," said I. "And I will have roast beef and a big baked potato and a big glass of that very dark beer Mr. Fippany can point at on the menu-card and a big cup of black coffee, and a big black cigar."

Off in a corner of one of the side rooms, under the black oak timbers of the ceiling, with Breaksteel discreetly hidden under the table, we ordered according to schedule. Mr. Fippany, holding the menu-card close to him, pointed first at the beer he wanted and then at another item, asking what it was.

"Hasenpfeffer," said the waiter.

"An' what, my lord, is hasenpfeffer?" went on Mr. Fippany.

"Rabbit," said the waiter.

Nowhere have I declared that Breaksteel was a dog of startling brilliance, but the fact is, and it must be stated in all fairness, that at the word "rabbit" he rushed barking from under the table; whereupon Addie said severely that he ought to be

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ashamed of himself and to get back under the shadow of the low hanging table-cloth. Nevertheless she substituted hasenpfeffer for chicken on her order, so that she could smuggle some of it to Breaksteel under the table.

I telephoned to the hospital while we waited for our dinner: Mrs. Fippany was doing "beautifully," the night nurse said.

That night at home, Addie came to the third floor to tell me good night; and when she had kissed me she smiled and whispered, "When am I going to get my ring?"

CHAPTER XVII

—*Confessions Of A Wife*

THE morning newspaper man, no matter at what time he goes to bed, gets up as a rule about 10 A. M. Sometimes now I was in bed even before midnight, but still I kept to my ten-o'clock rising and my eleven-o'clock breakfast. For two or three mornings after our celebration at Lüchow's, drifting in my sleep, I felt something soft and infinitely gentle brush my lips, the consciousness of it remaining with me when I awoke. And pinned to the left lapel of my coat there was every morning now a tiny square of paper with a cross penciled on it.

Going to sleep one night I charged my subconscious mind to wake me if that something as light as a dropped flower-petal touched my lips, and at eight o'clock I woke looking into the brooding eyes of Addie.

"No, no, you should *not* wake up," she scolded frowning. "You must sleep and rest. I have

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been so careful, but I reckon I was stupid and awkward. I was telling you good-by before going to school."

"Oh, I have slept plenty," I comforted her. "Have you a few minutes to spare before going to school?"

"Yes, I have, and I want to have a serious talk with you, Jim. I see you so little. You're asleep when I go away to school. You're away when I come to lunch, and you rush away after dinner. And then at night when I slide down the pole to talk to you while you're at supper you hurry up so I can get back to bed. Oh, I know! And besides you're not serious when you talk to me. You just make jokes with your gray eyes even when you seem to be serious."

"Well, Addie, now I am very serious indeed. You just sit there on the side of the bed and be easy. Then you may talk as soberly and as solemnly as ever you please."

She ran her finger around a pattern of the bedspread for a few moments, drew her black eyebrows close together in tense thought, and finally let herself go with a rush.

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"Jim, do you know, I am terribly afraid the guests suspect there 's something between us."

"No, no, how could they? What makes you think so?"

"I can't explain just exactly all the things that make me think so; the way they act toward me—and everything."

"Have you told anybody anything?"

"Of course not, Jim. We just the same as promised mama not to."

"Well, I have n't either. It's our secret, is n't it?"

"Jim, after all, I reckon I *have* told something—in a *kind* of way I have."

"How, Addie?" I asked with tremendous severity.

"Oh, I can't help it. When anybody speaks your name or even the name of your newspaper, and especially when I do, my eyes just will fall, and I feel the nicest warmest feeling come up over me, all up my back and my neck and my ears and into my face and even into my hair; and when the guests are near me they laugh and say, 'Look;

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the sun rises in her face.' Major Rossmore said it first, but now they all say it.

"Jim, you 're not provoked with me, are you?" She looked anxiously at me, bending down low so that she could look up under my eyes. "Because, you know, I can't help it."

"No, Addie; no mortal can hold back the rising sun—or would want to. Look in the glass: it has risen." She walked to the dresser, peered into the mirror, and quickly covered her face with her hands. Then she came slowly back and sat down on the bed again.

"And then there 's something more," she faltered, staring at the bedspread. "Whenever Breaksteel is naughty and needs a talking-to I tell him to be nice like Jim, and sometimes a guest hears me say it. Yesterday over at the hospital I had to leave him with the man at the gate, and he got loose from the string I had around his neck and chased a nice old yellow cat all around through the yard and into the halls and even the rooms. They told me at the hospital *never* to bring that dog there again; and when I came

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back I took Breaksteel into my room to give him a terrible talking-to. Mrs. Rossmore heard me tell him that Jim Pickett would never in the world do such a thing as he had done, disgracing all of us—but then, I don't believe she would tell anybody anything, do you? She's so nice.

“And—and one morning, Jim, I was up on the roof to feed my pigeons, my dear old tramps, because I thought if there was snow on the streets everywhere they would n't maybe find anything at all to eat. So I gave them plenty of oats and corn before I opened their door, and as they flew out to be gone all day I said—like a little silly, I reckon—to each one of them, ‘Go now, and if you see my Jim anywhere you flap your wings at him and maybe he will think of me.’ And I suddenly caught the smell of coffee ever so faintly, and turning around I saw Mr. Hennepin looking out toward the boats on the East River. I don't know whether he heard me or not. I always talk kind of low to the pigeons because they talk low to themselves.”

“Is that all, Addie?”

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"Yes, they are the things I have done. Are n't they terrible? Are you mad at me?"

"Why, no. . . ."

"Oh, Jim, I must run. It's school-time. You will be cross if I get a bad mark. Quick! Let me kiss you. There, there, and there! Good-by, dear Jim."

And pointing her toes straight ahead of her, she rushed out; and I slept no more that morning.

When later I rose and dressed I found all my ties and handkerchiefs and shirts neatly arranged in the dresser drawers. Buttons had been sewed on shirts that the laundry had maltreated. Six or seven of the pockets of my one spare suit and my holiday overcoat contained sachet-bags, and sachet-bags were strategically placed in many corners of the drawers among my things. Moreover, I left them just as they were. Could man's devotion go further?

That midnight when I came in, a vest pocket of mine bulged with a little pink cardboard box. After Addie was warmly wrapped up and in the chair beside me, I pulled out the box and slipped it into her hand under the table.

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She opened it below the level of the table, as if all the world were watching to catch our precious secret. "Oh, Jim!" she whispered breathlessly. "The *ring!*"

But I put my fingers to my lips and pointed up-stairs. And when I had been paid, and paid in full a million times over, and she was back in her chair, she asked soberly, "Must I put it on my right hand, Jim?"

And I said, "Yes."

"And you will see what this ring will do," she whispered excitedly. "I have thought and thought and *thought* about it. When I don't want to study I will suddenly see it on my finger, and then everything will be *so* easy. It will make me remember to take deep breaths when I am out in the open air, like you say for me to do, which I forget sometimes, Jim. And when Breaksteel is naughty, and the pigeons won't come home early at night, and everything goes wrong, and I am so provoked I don't know what to do hardly, I will turn the ring, like in the

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fairy-tale, and you will be with me and I will remember that I am your wife and then nothing will bother me any more."

She turned and turned the small gold band on her finger.

"Jim, won't you look at me? You just keep your eyes away. You are n't laughing at me in your eyes, are you, Jim?"

I looked at her. She gazed at me for a moment, then softly whispered: "Yes, I know. I feel that way a lot of times, and when I am happiest, too. Is n't it strange?" She reached out her hand and laid it defensively on my shoulder.

After a while Addie asked gravely, "Jim, have you thought about where we 're to live?"

"Well," I said, "I like it pretty well here, for the present, don't you?"

"Yes, I do, too."

"But often, Addie, I do think of a house when I am out in the streets and the crowds are very thick and irritating. There is a bayou in a pine forest where the tall trees are always whispering

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among themselves. I see a log house on a bluff above the bayou. It has a long porch in front and a long one behind. In the front yard are flowers, many kinds of them, and behind the house is a big vegetable garden, all fenced in so that the chickens and the ducks and the geese and the guineas and the turkeys may run loose. The ducks and the geese may go down to the bayou to swim; the others may go ranging out in the woods as far as ever they please.

“There is a flat-bottomed boat, Addie, tied in the bayou below the bluff, among the yellow and white water-lilies. Not far out in front of the house is a white country road, where wagons and buggies pass often; and sometimes the people will stop in at the log house to talk a while and maybe to have dinner. Two miles away is a small town; on Sundays the church-bells come out that far, if the wind is right, and on the other days the whistles from the sawmill and the cotton-seed mill come floating into the doors and windows even when they are shut. And some-

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times, too, a chicken-wagon man stops to stay all night there."

"Oh, Jim, though there is no log house there now, I know that place."

"Where is it? I can't remember."

"You *do* remember. Out beyond Crebillon, down in Louisiana, where you came to us that night."

"Oh, yes, so it is, so it is."

"Where I saw you the first time, Jim."

"Well, maybe when we are old, Addie, we shall go there and build that house, and listen to the bells and the far-away whistles and the whispers of the tall pine-trees, and be quiet, and rest and rest and rest."

"Oh, I know," said Addie, jumping out of her chair and standing by my chair. "You're just a dear, tired, old newspaper man. You've had a hard day. Come, go to bed. And all the time after this I will not wake you in the morning when I go to school. I will just whisper through the keyhole, 'Good-by, Jim,' and blow a kiss through it for you."

CHAPTER XVIII

—Fippany For Any Old Thing

THAT log house in the deep silent woods by the softly flowing stream—it is the international dream-home of hurried and harried newspaper men, perhaps of many more hard-driven city men. It is not a large house, nor need it be, for they go there only in the spirit, and spirits need little room.

Was I not to go there when I was old? Well, I am forty years old by the calendar and forty centuries old in spirit—and am Long Emergency sitting here at 3:30 A. M. in the "Transcript" office. When I am fifty they will probably put me in charge of the "morgue" up in the library, where I shall spend all my time clipping articles out of the papers about notable and nefarious people and events to file away in row upon row of little drawers for barely possible future reference. When I am sixty they will assign me

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to the exciting job of answering letters of lunatics who would like to know the last line of the poem beginning, "The night was cold and dark and dreary," etc. And when I am seventy—well, perhaps I shall have given myself an assignment then and covered it without writing a single line about it. Why not now, why not now, as the Salvation Army girls sing so appealingly? I don't know, I don't know; I shall drift a while yet, if you please, a little while anyway.

But come, we must get on with our story of the chicken-wagon family. An old man has a perfect passion for reminiscences and moralizing.

All right, then; I shall tell how Mr. Jean Paul Baptiste Yvonne Fippany made me a flattering offer. After the great bath-tub coup he had continued his regular rounds with his jingling junk-wagon, but I knew he was out more to watch and think than to buy small lots of et cetera. So I suggested that I ask the real-estate editor of the "Transcript" to notify me as soon as he had heard of negotiations to sell any building, large or small, that was likely to be wrecked and removed; whereupon Mr. Fippany was to see

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whether he could repeat his achievement of the Prince William bath-tubs.

Within six months, Mr. Fippany had manoeuvred three or four more such sales, and one day in the following spring, when I was due to have a holiday, he invited me to drive with him on his wagon. He waited patiently until I had finished my habitual morning sleep, so that we were not outside until one o'clock. He made directly for First Avenue along the East River front, where there was comparatively little traffic, and we moved slowly northward in the delightfully warm sun.

Mr. Fippany kept pulling his hat further and further down over his left eye, and shaking the lines over the mules, and clucking energetically, though I knew, and Kit and Luce knew, that he did not want them to go any less slowly than they possibly could. It was obvious that he was about to say something that bulked large in his mind.

"Well, Jim," he began finally, when we were passing Forty-second Street where it meets the East River, "what about this newspaper business?"

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"It is very interesting, anyhow."

"No, no, is it a promisin' business?"

"I understand it pays the stockholders somewhere around three per cent."

"Are you a stockholder, Jim?"

"No, I am a reporter."

"Yes, yes, damn it, but you ain't answerin' my question."

"I have answered every question you have asked, Mr. Jean Fippany. Proceed with the examination."

"How old are you? Are you makin' any money to speak of? Are you puttin' anything in the bank? Do you see any future in it for you?"

"You talk, Mr. Fippany, like a very practical lady I know, a portly lady with large black eyes. But I will answer your questions categorically. The answer to Question No. 1 is: twenty-five; to No. 2: about seventy-five dollars a week; to No. 3: about twenty-five dollars a week; to No. 4: I might some day make a hundred dollars a week or a little more. And as there is always a possibility, to put it strongly, that any American

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boy may become President, so I might become an editor with some stock paying three per cent."

"Now, Jim, you listen to your friend, the junkman. Giddap, Kit; giddap, Luce."

"I am listening."

"Jim, New York is mad about land an' buildin'. Land goes up in price, buildin's come down before they are nearly old enough to scrap, new an' bigger buildin's go up where they stood. Every time a good buildin' comes down there's a lot of A-1 stuff to buy an' resell again because it is still good, often as good as it ever was. There are a million or so bargain-hunters in an' around New York. There are buyers for any bargain a man can offer. Some day somebody is goin' to combine the wreckin' an' resellin' business. He will take down twenty stories an' resell everything that comes out of it except the dust and old mortar.

"Out there in Long Island City," went on Mr. Fippany, waving his arm toward the east, "just across the river, where storage space is cheap now, he'll have ten acres or so of yards and warehouses. An' a man, or more probably a woman,

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will walk down a half-mile of radiators as serviceable as when they left the foundry, select from a thousand bath-tubs, wander in a forest of electric lighting-fixtures an', if she's a real bargain-hunter, she will just about lose her mind at what she sees an' the prices she hears."

"I should n't care, Mr. Fippany, to be in a business of driving people into insanity."

"He will have a large force of repairers an' painters an' such like out there in Long Island City," continued Mr. Fippany, disregarding interruptions with the imperturbability of the true enthusiast in the thrall of a master idea. "They will make the things *look* as good as they are. It fairly gives me the shivers to think of the tons an' tons of manufactured metal, into which so much labor an' skill has gone since it left the furnace, all broken up before it has scarcely settled down into usefulness, to go back to the meltin'-pot again. An' the things fabricated of wood that need only cleanin', a new peg or a nail or a dab of glue, they are often smashed up an' not even used for kindlin' fires.

"I will have mountains of bricks," went on

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Mr. Fippany, moving easily from third person to first, "so that a man, if he wants to, can patch a hole in a wall or add a new story to his place an' keep the color-scheme. So also for stone. A customer out there can find a radiator to match the ones he's got, a plank of black walnut already aged, or mahogany, or oak, or anything that was once in a buildin', business or private. In my furniture department he can probably come across a piece to fit any space, any scheme or need or lunatic fancy that he may have. People are goin' to need my things, they are goin' to want 'em, they are goin' to know I've got 'em too."

"Yes," I said, "I see the slogan that you must make familiar to all New York and its subject territory. You must advertise it so that whenever one of these six or eight or ten million people has a want in your line instantly there will rise from his subconscious mind, into which it has been repeatedly dropped from newspapers, signs on your wagons and trunks, circulars, letter-heads, envelopes, and a thousand other places, this slogan: 'Fippany For Any Old Thing.'"

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“Good!” said Mr. Fippany without smiling in the least. “Very good, Jim, an’ thank you for the idea. I will get in first an’ get established in my line; an’ after a while I’ll be an institution, like the Democratic party or the Republican. The imitators that come after me, if I am a success, will have to pay ten times as much as I paid to establish themselves. I will be first in my line. First to be known anyway. Maybe somebody now does what I plan to do. If so I don’t know it. But ten years from now, maybe less, you cain’t find anybody in this territory who does n’t know that you can see ‘Fippany For Any Old Thing.’

“But, Jim, I ’m goin’ to advertise only the business. On the streets only my friends will know my face. I’ll not plaster that around everywhere, like these damned medicine-men. An’ I’ll never use a sign-board out in the country. I think too much of the country an’ the green places to mix in sign-boards with the grass and trees.”

“Listen, Mr. Fippany, what do you hear just behind us?”

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"I hear two rows of junkman's bells," he said, laughing. "Oh, I know I've got far to go. Maybe I'll never get there. But I'm on the trail, an' it smells warm. This dog-goned city has stimulated me like good liquor. An' I'm not talkin' so wild as you think, Jim. I've been watching things since I've been here; I've talked to a hundred wreckin'-bosses; I've done business with a lot of them; an' I've turned this thing over an' over in my mind as I've drove around these streets with them junkman's bells jinglin' behind me there. I'm ready to jump, Jim. I've already jumped a little. It won't be long before I jump——"

"Into the fire, Mr. Fippany," I interrupted a little roughly to prod him into a full defense of his plan. "Who is going over to Long Island City to buy your things? Most of your customers will have to come from Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Westchester, and New Jersey; and it is hard to get to Long Island City. Only a ferry and a few roundabout trolleys and elevated lines carry one there."

"Jim, an honest-to-goodness bargain-hunter

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will go anywhere for their game. Besides, it will be worth while for anybody to go to Fippany's place. Furthermore, Jim, it won't be long before there are bridges and subways in plenty to get people to Long Island City. There's lots of land over there, an' New York must go to land that is near-by. There's no choice—it's got to do it."

"Yes, that's true, Mr. Fippany."

"Now, Jim, you may feel like askin' me what all this shootin' is about, what it's got to do with you. Well, I want you for a partner. We'd start low on the ground of course. We'd fly later. There'd be advertisin' to do; you could look after that. There'd be genteel consultin' an' interviewin' to do; you could do that. There'd be, sometimes anyway, a lot of hired people to keep an eye on; you could help me with that. Fippany & Pickett—or Pickett & Fippany, I don't care a hang who comes first—Wreckin' an' Resellin' Company. How does that sound? It sings to me.

"Now, Jim, we've been partners a good deal already. We've been travelin' together a fairly

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long way. Let's go on together, closer than we've ever been. Put in what you've got, Jim; it's half an' half for us. If I can take a chance you can. You ain't even married."

"Well, in a way I'm married," I said. "Anyway, I'm pledged."

Mr. Fippany turned square around in his seat to scrutinize my face piercingly, almost brushing me with his rapidly moving shaggy eyebrows.

"Well, by dogs, Jim, you'll bear watchin', you will. You're a mystery, a dark mystery, an' here I've been thinkin' your life was a open book, as the politicians say. You'd better not tell Addie, or there'll be tantrums. You think she's quiet an' easy-goin' an' not carin' a tearin' lot about anything. You're mistaken. She's got control of herself—her mother's taught her that after givin' her a good start by bein' the mother of her—but when anything touches her at all it touches her deep. She'll not stand for you marryin'. Poor Addie, there *will* be a storm. You may not hear it, Jim, but the less you hear the more it will tear her up."

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"It's Addie I'm talking about now, Mr. Fippany."

"Jim, damn it, you're worse than ten mysteries. You're a son-in-law, to let you tell it. Give the facts, as your Mr. Gleason says; give the full facts."

We had then got far up on First Avenue, and Mr. Fippany turned westward and entered Central Park. He knew a policeman would presently tell him to get that junk-wagon to hell out of there; and Mr. Fippany would get it out at the lower end of the park. He had learned to take traffic policemen philosophically, or at least with perfectly passive resistance.

As we drove along under the freshly greened trees, I told Mr. Fippany of that night before his wife went to the hospital, without telling him what she had said. I made it clear that she was excited, indeed panic-stricken. Nevertheless, when Addie was nineteen, and not before, I meant to carry out my part of the contract if she should be willing. On the other hand, she was a child that night and was not to be held by me to the contract. In other words, since I was an adult

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when the contract was made, I considered myself bound, regardless of the circumstances, and gladly bound; but as she was a child she was to feel entirely free so far as I should be able to make her feel free. That was only fair.

"Which will not be at all, Jim. That child is as reliable as her mother. What she says she will stick to."

"No, when she is seventeen or eighteen, and has gone to college and met the friends and brothers of her chums there, she will probably come to know what real love is. She and I some day will very likely laugh and joke about our make-believe wedding, while I am holding some splendid boy of hers on my knee who will call me Uncle Jim."

"Well, Jim, I notice you have taken charge of her, anyway. Do you mean to send her to college?"

"She ought to go. She ought to have a period of time away from home, in a different environment, among an entirely new set of people. She'll be out of high school next summer.

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She's over fifteen now. I don't know whether you have watched her school work, but she's gone like lightning through elementary, grammar, and high school."

"I have watched it, Jim, an' Josephine an' I know who's partly responsible."

"She should easily get through college, Mr. Fippany, when she's nineteen. And then—who knows? She will be a beautiful, high-spirited utterly charming girl with that quiet, tense, grand manner of her mother's. Somehow I do not seem to see her considering a twenty-nine-year-old stick of a newspaper man otherwise than as an appealing old codger who will be so delighted to take her to a vaudeville show on his night off that sometimes she will go with him for the sake of old times and to please the old fellow.

"By the way, Mr. Fippany, if there should be any trouble about financing Addie's stay in college, I want you to let me in on it. I have n't a soul in the world dependent on me. And she's got to have her chance."

"You say, Jim, she will look on that offer as a

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childish make-believe an' will probably see some one who will sweep her off her feet. How about yourself? You talk like all boys. At twenty-five you talk like Methuselah."

"Until she is nineteen I hold myself subject to her orders—and a most willing subject I am, too."

"All right, Jim; you join me in this business of mine," said Mr. Fippany, laying his hand on my shoulder affectionately, and smiling as if he had sprung a verbal trap on me; "an' then there'll be no trouble about college or the fine clothes or the fine friends—oh, I know she'll need money to beat the band—or anything; we'll just charge all checks made out to Addie Fippany to the general runnin' expenses of the Fippany & Pickett Wreckin' and Resellin' Company."

"Mr. Fippany, it's all kind of generous of you to give me this chance. You will likely be a very rich man and, what's more, feel that you are doing a service by salvaging so much that's been wasted before this. But I like this business I'm in. I like everything about it. And that is hard to explain too. I have a faint, dis-

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turbing suspicion that some day I shall regret every reasonable opportunity to escape the newspaper business that I ever passed by.

“The morning newspaper man’s life is not promising. He works while other people sleep or are entertaining themselves, so he has no outside social life, or almost none. He gambles on each week’s income, knowing that it won’t be a great deal and that it may be much less than a great deal. Nor is he sure from week to week that his job will continue. There are often changes of city editors and managing editors, and then usually the iron ball rolls, as they say, whereupon many of the staff must find new jobs.

“And still I love it. I am by nature, I think, a good deal of a nocturnal animal; night work does n’t bother me. I like to drift into the office not knowing what I am to do, in what direction I am to go; whether I am to have a quiet easy story that will be finished by night or some tremendously exciting thing that will last for weeks. I like the daily contests with the men of other papers to get the news and to write it. More often than not, all the newspaper men get virtu-

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ally the same raw material, but a man has a chance to analyze what he 's got, to see in it more than the other men, to dramatize it where they make it stodgy and heavy.

"I like the atmosphere of the office. I like newspaper people generally. They're a good sort, who have usually worked through more mortal nonsense at twenty-five than most other people have gotten through at seventy-five. I like to see the inside of things. I like to catch people with their masks off; newspaper men do. I like the smell of the freshly printed paper just up from the presses; it never, somehow, looks quite so good after that. I like the clicking telegraph instruments, which I know are bringing in the stream of the world's daily story; the tingle of excitement, the running of the office-boys (and they do sometimes run), the occasional chance to try to write a story that catches the authentic color and feeling and movement of an event. And, greatest thrill of all, I like to uncover pieces of truth, and you have no idea how hard truth is to find most of the time.

"Oh, yes, and then when I am old in it, when

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I have been kicked about from one paper to another, I shall curse myself for not getting out of it, especially for missing the chance to be Mr. Fippany's partner and so of being a rich man. When do you start?"

"Jim, I'm started already. Over there in Long Island City, where you say nobody will ever go, I've got an old frame buildin' that once was a factory of some sort. It's not big, an' in general it's a ornery-lookin' thing, but it's cheap an' it'll hold things for a while. I've got some things in it now that I've picked up, an' there's a bright boy on hand to sell 'em when I'm not there. Yes, it's a start. Gettin' a start on anything is a big strategic advantage. Never forget that, Jim. What you want to do make a start at, any how."

Now we were driving out of the lower end of Central Park, passing that streaming bronze horse and rider that forever charges down Fifth Avenue. It always quickens the blood and tightens the muscles of those who really see it, and presently Mr. Fippany was urging Kit and Luce down Fifth Avenue. When we had turned east-

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ward into the quieter stream of Lexington Avenue traffic, Mr. Fippany smiled and, referring back to the beginning of our conversation, said, "Well, Jim, I'm glad it's not the Febber woman; I've noticed her peeling her pale eye at you."

"And at you, too, Mr. Fippany, I've observed, since you transformed the Prince William bathtubs into cash."

"Bosh, Jim, I'm an old man. I'm forty-two."

"Approaching the dangerous age, Mr. Fippany. Look out. The doctors now say men have a dangerous age as well as women."

"There'll be no dangerous age for old Fippany with Josephine at Six-A House."

But we both forgot all about Miss Minnie Febber at that moment, for we had turned into our block, and down the street we saw Addie, both arms extended, a fluttering white figure flying toward us.

CHAPTER XIX

—*Magic Transformation*

I HAD not intended when Mr. Fippany and I began our ride together in front of his rows of junkman's bells to tell him of Addie's and my secret. But the conversation had drifted to the point where it seemed less than frank to keep quiet on that subject any longer to him. Besides, I had felt all along that he was entitled to know all the facts. I would have made an opportunity to speak of it before to him, on the bare chance of Mrs. Fippany's not having already told him, except that when I had tried to hear myself in my imagination telling him I had always bungled the story. So I had drifted silently on.

I said just now that the secret into which I had let Mr. Fippany was Addie's and mine. Li Teo Po did n't count; one felt that all that had ever passed through his senses to his brain was a secret sealed forever. Possibly he babbled about

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nearly everything under heaven to his cronies in Mott Street of a Sunday night as he gambled and drank Chinese wines, but I am sure that Li Teo Po would have considered it impious to utter Addie's name or to touch upon her affairs in a fan-tan house.

But there was Mrs. Fippany. She had never referred to that ceremony by candle-light on that night when she was trying to make up her mind to submit to an operation. It had occurred to me after her return from the hospital that she might be a little ashamed of her panic and did n't want to talk about the matter, though I have never known her to give any evidence of being ashamed of any act of hers. She appears to proceed on the assumption that what she does cannot be anything to be ashamed of.

On the other hand, was it possible, I often asked myself, that she was willing, that she preferred indeed, that that night should be forgotten for other reasons? I had known even in the days when Addie was a sallow, liver-spotted, homely little girl with bony arms and skinny legs that Mrs. Fippany had foreseen her trans-

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formation—which was not yet complete, but the completion of which was obvious to any one with eyes—and had made imperial plans for her. Had part of Mrs. Fippany's agony of that night been the pain of compromising on a lower plane for what she considered a certainty?

Well, what if she did look at the matter in that light? What if she had called upon me in an emergency for what she believed was Addie's interest? How could I blame any one for working in Addie's behalf? Perhaps Mrs. Fippany was thinking, while she said nothing, that though luck had played on my side then, it might sometime play against me; and that her cue was to drift with time and let circumstance have full play.

At any rate, having fallen into the confession to Mr. Fippany, which had cleared my mind, I was moved to clear up the situation as regards Addie to Addie herself, if possible.

One of my joyous devotions to my little make-believe wife was to try to make her Saturdays very special holidays instead of just days free of school routine. And the Saturday following my

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talk with Mr. Fippany, Addie and I visited our friends at the Zoo, had dinner at Mouquin's on Sixth Avenue, and then went to Hammerstein's old Victoria Theater on Forty-second Street, where one of the vaudeville numbers was Mr. and Mrs. O'Shea in their famous fight. It was probably their fiftieth appearance at Hammerstein's.

Walking slowly back home, arm in arm, we came to Six-A House shortly after midnight. It was still warm, and the house after our walk seemed stuffy, so we went up on the roof. The moon rode straight above us, pouring down light that made the little city lights appear absurdly superfluous. We could see plainly the boats in the East River, and a passing Sound steamer shook out music that drifted in faint, lilting waves on the undulating breeze to our ears. The pigeons in their small house, confused by the flood of moonlight but still knowing it was not yet day, talked to each other about it, changed their positions with little ruffings, and went to sleep again.

There were always chairs on the roof of Six-A House in the summer, and we tilted two straight-

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backed ones against the brick wall that rose a few feet above the graveled tin under our feet, and sat down, talking as low as we could more because of our habit of early-morning conversation than because there was any danger of our disturbing any one.

I noticed again, as I had noticed several times already of late, that Addie's head came well above my shoulder in spite of her fifteen years. I had been noticing for months, with something akin to awe, the swift miracle of her physical development. She was after all a daughter of the semi-tropical South, and that night she was a little black-eyed princess in white, a princess who was sensible, one would have thought, of heavy but precious responsibilities.

"Addie, you will finish high school next spring, and then you are going to college, are n't you?"

"Oh, Jim, are you going to talk about that again? Must I go to college?"

"You will need only three years, I am sure. You will be glad you did go."

"But what about us, Jim, you and me?"

"Yes, I wanted to talk about that to-night."

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"I am afraid. It makes me cold already. You sound so solemn."

"Addie, when you come out of college you will find me waiting."

"Why, of course I shall find you waiting, dear old Jim, and you will find me ready. And then comes the church wedding, I reckon, though we don't really need any, and a lot of fuss and nonsense. Will you be scared, Jim?"

"You must *not* think of *yourself* as waiting, Addie. You must think of yourself as—well, as if that night had never been—"

"Oh, Jim, what ever do you mean?" Addie let down her chair and stood straight in front of me. "Do you mean I am not—"

"Don't worry, Addie; everything is all right. What I mean is that I was a grown man that night and you were a child; and while I am bound, you must have a chance when you come out of college to decide, you must decide as a woman as I have already decided as a man."

"And now I am just a kid, Jim? Is that what you mean? Oh, how you hurt me, Jim! A kid, is that what you mean? I am free, am I? I

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must think of that night and what I said as if it had not been and as if I had not said it? Well, if I am free, you are free. And I reckon that is what you wanted me to say. Here is your ring. And I am going to bed."

Holding herself as straight as a soldier, she moved with something of her mother's majesty, slowly, toward the door leading downstairs. At the steps she stopped and without turning her head said without a tremor, "And I think—I think it's good-by, Jim."

And then in a flash she had wheeled and was back in front of me, her arms tight around my neck and her body pressed close to mine. I pulled her closer still and kissed her as men do not kiss little girls.

"Jim, Jim, stop; you frighten me. You never kissed me that way before. No, no, don't turn me loose. Oh, hold me tighter still. It seems as if all the world were melting into fine sand and slipping away from under my feet and there were only you to hold to, and I am glad of it. Kiss me again, Jim, kiss me again. . . . Now don't do it any more. I am afraid."

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"Had n't we better go down-stairs, Addie?"

"Oh, Jim, look. The moon is wrapping herself all up in those white clouds, and see how they flutter away behind her, because, you see, she is going so fast. Do you see that yellow star over there—lay your head against my arm and sight along it to where my finger is pointing—and that red one and that very big blue one? Oh, Jim, you must tell me all about them—and don't drive me away to bed. Slip down to your room—it's nearest—and bring me your overcoat. It's chilly now."

When she was wrapped up she said: "Now, Jim, sit down, and you must let me sit in your lap, because you say I am a little child—oh, hear me laugh, though I did n't mean to, Jim—and hold me close to keep me warm, and we'll talk and talk and not care anything about to-morrow at all. Here, slip my ring back on my finger, and shame on you for making it come off. It must never, never come off my finger that way again."

Now she had forgotten that she had wanted to hear the stories of the stars. We sat still

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listening, for an excursion-boat was beating back from a pleasure day up the Sound, breathing deep and sighing like some huge, tired, gentle monster. On tiny waves of wind young voices laughing came to us, tinkling bells in the night, and floated away into the distance.

"But none of them is as happy as I am, Jim. And I wish they all were. But they just *could n't* be. Do you hear the pigeons talking? They are whispering too. The whole world is so quiet that I hear your heart go *thump, thump, thump-itty thump*. Oh, Jim, it is beating *very* fast and hard. Do you love me, Jim?"

"Yes, Addie."

"Will you love me always and always and always?"

"Always and forever and forever again, Addie."

"Jim, are you making fun? Let me see your eyes; let me see if they are twinkling. No, I don't believe you are making fun. Will you promise not to talk any more as you started to talk to-night?"

"I shall not begin it next time."

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"Well, Jim, then I promise to do whatever you wish about school, about college, about everything. I will go to that old college up the Hudson, but, oh, how I shall rush through it! Because at the end of college stands Jim, and never again will we be separated, will we, Jim?"

"Never, Addie, if I can help it."

"Look how the white night changes everything. That old gas-tank over yonder is like a great silver pot for a good giant to eat his soup from, like that we had at Mouquin's to-night—*petite marmite*, was n't it? And that soiled old building over on the other side has strips of silver on all its edges—is n't it beautiful, Jim, now? There comes an elevated train. It sounds like a city snoring. There, I hear a baby crying. Poor little baby! I wish I could take him in my arms and sing him to sleep. . . .

"Listen, I hear St. George's old clock striking. One, two! I hate to go to bed, but I must, I reckon. But don't turn me loose yet, Jim. A little while longer, just a little while. I almost thought I had lost my Jim to-night. We will just stay this way a minute longer, and not say

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anything at all, but I will hear your heart beat.”

And so we sat, my eyes on the stars and my mind straining on beyond them, Addie’s head against my breast. She was so quiet that I looked to see if she had gone to sleep. Her shining eyes met mine.

“Kiss me, Jim—once as you used to do and once as you did to-night. Then I will go.”

And a man and woman went down the stairs.

CHAPTER XX

—*Miss Febber Intervenes*

FOR some reason that does n't at once seem clear to me I prefer, even after so long a time, to think of that Sunday morning in the third person. It was in the month following my fruitless attempt to make Addie realize her proper position with reference to our make-believe marriage; a hot, sultry July morning when one who had a good excuse for sleeping late was glad to take advantage of it. And the man in this case had such an excuse—he was myself—for he had crept into bed between 4 and 5 A. M., having been assigned to do a death-watch—to wait in a small reception-room on the first floor of a rich man's house for word from the third floor that he had died. His obituary had been written and put into type; all that the paper had needed was a bulletin of the event and whatever last-minute details were obtainable. He had died, provok-

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ingly, after the last edition of the paper had gone to press.

That tired newspaper man had decided to sleep—or to lie in bed at any rate—until twelve o'clock, Sunday being a dull day in a newspaper office as a rule and dinner at Six-A House being late because Mrs. Fippany and family and most of the remunerative guests went to their various churches. He had accordingly set his veteran alarm-clock for high noon and left a note on the dining-room table that Li Teo Po was not, please, to bring up coffee at 10 A. M.

Nevertheless shortly after eleven o'clock—he had dimly heard the church-bells ringing—some one knocked at his door. Thinking that it was good old Li Teo Po, who was insisting on bringing him a bracer of coffee, he said at once, "Come in." The head of his bed was toward the wall that contained the door, but he heard the knob turn and felt that the door was slowly opening. He did not move.

He always had his room darkened with blinds for the sake of better daylight sleep. He saw light enter the opened door, and saw it then grad-

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ually cut off while the room darkened, and heard the door softly closed. A faint perfume came to him; he sat up. Miss Febber stood by his bed, smiling.

"It's a rotten shame to disturb your slumbers," she said, "but I've cut my finger and everybody except you and me is out of the house. Even Li is out there in the back yard fiddling around with those mules. He'd live in that stable if he could. He'll stay out there until he thinks Mrs. Fippany is about ready to break away from church. Anyway, he'd never understand what I want.

"So I want you to tie this thread around this bandage I've already put on the cut place, please. I've got to dress to go out to dinner with a gang of girls who keep their own apartment. And if I don't get this finger tied up soon so the blood will have a chance to clot and stop I'll mess up everything I touch. If it were only my left hand I could manage it myself. You just sit up in bed and tie it for me. Then I'll slip out again, and you can go on dreaming. I'm not in

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any tearing hurry, but I 've got to get this blood stopped *now*."

The man sat up without a word.

"It 's a shame to spoil your nap," she went on sympathetically. "Can you see to tie it—is there light enough?"

"Yes," he said, "there is plenty of light."

"Wait a minute," she went on, "and I 'll sit here on the side of the bed so you won't have to reach out so far. You 'll get entirely waked up if you strain yourself, won't you? I was afraid to try to put on anything except this kimono because I 'd have bloodied everything I touched. You don't mind, do you?"

There was indeed a small red spot showing through the narrow white bandage on Miss Febber's forefinger. Every time the knot was about to be tied her hand jerked, unwinding the thread, so that the tying had to be begun all over again.

"I 'm so awkward; forgive me, won't you?" Her voice was soft and silky. "Let me get these flappy old kimono sleeves out of the way. Then maybe I can do better."

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She rolled the silk back from her marvelous arms, as white as milk and surely as perfectly shaped as arms ever were, with no hint of a callous brown spot at the elbow-joints. It occurred to him that she must take abnormal care of her body, and that he didn't blame her; it deserved care.

"Now let's try again," she breathed. "I'll lean closer."

The front of her kimono flared open. The breasts now visible were as perfect as her arms. She crossed her legs as if to make herself more comfortable, and a magically beautiful leg in a white silk stocking appeared to plead with the man. He glanced at it and lifted his eyes upward to the bandaged forefinger. His raised eyes moved alternately from that to a photograph on the dresser.

Once more the thread was about to be tied when Miss Febber jumped. "Oh, you pulled it too tight and hurt me," she whispered, and, losing her balance, apparently, fell sidewise across his body. He sat absolutely still, gritting his teeth.

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"What must you think of me?" Miss Febber said mournfully as she sat up again. "Nothing seems to go right this morning."

"Now you pull up that chair," he said brusquely, "and sit in it. Get yourself together; buck up. This is the last try at this thing we're going to have. Steady, steady now! There; we've got it. Beat it, Miss Febber, scoot! I must get in an hour's sleep before dinner."

"You're a wonder," she whispered, bending over him, smiling broodingly. "You must have nerves of steel. You lead this terrible night life—and a lot of dissipation with it, I suppose—and yet you can hold a little thread between your fingers without a tremor. Wonderful, wonderful man!"

There was something more than a trace of mockery in Miss Febber's voice. She moved to the door. She halted a second there.

"I'm so obliged to you. You've given me a lift."

"Don't mention it. Now beat it. I'm going to sleep."

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"Sleep long and deep and sweet, Mr. Pickett," she murmured. "You deserve it. Now I 'm going. I had better be going, too. Addie will be coming home soon; and if she saw me in this room, even on so innocent an errand, I believe she would poison me. But she's a darling *child*, is n't she?"

And the door closed, Miss Febber laughing softly. But the man's eyes closed no more that morning. He lit a cigarette. The match shook in his hands. He kept saying over and over again in his mind, "She must be got out of Addie's home."

CHAPTER XXI

—*Letters To A Married Man*

I WONDER if other people do not sometimes ask themselves fearfully, while the cold shivers run down their backs and up again, "Suppose I should die right now in this situation?" Well, to-night Old Long Emergency sits here in the "Star" office, all alone, as he usually is at his favorite hour of 4 A. M., turning over in his unsteady hands a bundle of letters tied with a red ribbon that once held a bundle of fifty cigars together.

I remember I planned to walk boldly into a store and say easily, "A yard of ribbon, white; half-inch wide, please." But I could n't do it. I am always fancying I can see into other people's minds and read what they are thinking, and that other people likewise often know what I am thinking, and somehow I did not want any outsider concerning her mind, even remotely, with Addie's letters. I had a notion that the sales-

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girl would know what I wanted the ribbon for. Then the cigar ribbon came, and though it was red I used it.

Suppose I should die here suddenly this morning. The scrub-women would find me and the bundle of letters, or maybe I should have scattered them over the desk and floor in my struggle to live, at least long enough to put Addie's letters away.

I brought them down here from my old red trunk at Mrs. Ainslie's to pick out several that Addie wrote me that summer, the latter half of which I had to spend in Washington. They carry on this narrative a few steps nearer its conclusion. Besides, I've never copied any of her letters, and it has occurred to me that in doing so I may get some new meaning out of them; some new coloring around the corners of the words because I have to write them more slowly than my reading eye takes them in, just as a newspaper head-line read upside down makes a deeper impression than when read right side up. The mind must wait while the eye deciphers, and waiting it sees more and remembers more.

Letters To A Married Man

I went to Washington to relieve one of the "Transcript's" men there who was to go away on an indefinite leave of absence. His nerves had broken, as do the nerves of so many newspaper men. But I was to stay only two months; if he had not come back by that time some one else was to be put in his place.

This sudden assignment to Washington, coming immediately after my resolution to see that Miss Febber should no longer remain under the same roof that sheltered Addie, had helped to prevent me from doing anything toward carrying it into effect. After two or three days, anyway, I had begun to think that perhaps I had interpreted her conduct priggishly; that there had indeed been a red spot on that bandage; that her exhibition of her body was probably unconscious, as she was accustomed to being photographed for the sake of stockings, camisoles, and so on; that in all likelihood she would soon be moving of her own accord to be with more people of her age and temperament than she found at Six-A House: and, after all, I simply could not see myself in the rôle of virtuous accuser. In other words, I

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was drifting. I was an expert drifter. I still am.

Well, anyway, I cut out for Washington, forgetting Miss Febber. She could n't really hurt Addie.

Addie had already achieved a fine, firm, straightforward style of handwriting that I liked immensely, without any hooks and curls and affected doodabs about it. Here is one of her letters.

DEAR JIM:

You have been gone two years. Mama says two weeks, but I know better. I wake up sometimes early in the morning because of a noise down-stairs that comes up to me, and before I am awake I am at the old brass pole ready to slide down to talk in whispers to my Jim. Then I remember that he is far away, so I creep back to bed.

Maybe the poor sick newspaper man will get well quick. You would come right back then, would n't you?

Don't work too hard and please keep on writing me a post-card every day and a long letter

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Letters To A Married Man

every Sunday. I would ask you to write a letter every day only I suppose you get so tired of writing for the newspaper. I will write you something or other every day.

I read all the Washington stories that are marked "Special to The Transcript." I want to know what you've been working on. Oh, I can tell your stories. I don't understand much about all that politics, but I read them all just the same. In your stories, somehow, I can always see your gray eyes laughing even when they are about those dreadful politics. Jim, *is* politics plural or singular? You need n't think you can get out of tutoring me even if you are far away.

Major Rossmore and I are great pals now. I show him every night the despatch I think is yours and ask him if he does n't think so too. He reads it through *very* carefully; then he says, "Yes, that is undoubtedly our Jim."

We pick out things that sound like you and ask each other what we think. But sometimes we have the awfulest quarrels, until Mrs. Rossmore makes believe she will put us *both* to bed if

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we don't stop it. In that story yesterday where it said, "A quiet rumor is gaining currency," Major Rossmore declared up and down that that sounded just like you. But I said it did n't a bit. He said maybe the atmosphere of politics in Washington was changing you, as it has a way of changing people, or something like that, but that he seemed to see you writing, "A quiet rumor is gaining currency." Anyway, most of the time we agree. He *is* a dear.

But don't you dare let the atmosphere or anything else in Washington change you the least little bit. You just come back here the same old Jim you were when you went away that terrible day and left me and Breaksteel so miserable in the railroad station.

Well, mama is calling to me to go to bed. Everybody is always asking about you. Li Teo Po, Mr. Hennepin, Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. and Mrs. O'Shea both, and Miss Febber. I can't imagine how they know it, but they *act* as if they knew that you and I were writing to each other. What do you think of that now?

Well, papa is now squalling at me to go to bed

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or to snap out the light anyhow, which is the same thing, so I reckon I will have to stop writing. Breaksteel sends his best. So do the pigeons. What do you think? A little old boy, not more than sixteen, just in his long trousers, who is in my class at school, called me up to-day to ask if I would go with him to a dance. I told him I couldn't. He said, "Why not?" So I hung up the receiver.

Well, it is late and all the other lights are out in the house except mine, but I am not sleepy at all. I am going to snap out my light now; then when everybody else is surely asleep I'll slip up to the roof even if it is dark. Then I'll turn my ring and you will be there. And then I'll say, "Kiss me, Jim, and don't forget in that far-away place your loving wife."

Your loving wife,

ADDIE.

DEAR JIM:

Well, I reckon you will be sorry you went away and left your wife when you hear the news I am going to tell you. I have gone on the stage.

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Yes, sir, on the real stage, and had stage-fright, and heard the music play for our act, and had the prompter knock at our door to let us know to get ready and then again to let us know to come on, and heard the clapping of hundreds of hands just for us—and such a funny, *delightful* feeling it did give me too.

One day I was sitting in Mrs. O'Shea's room talking when suddenly she said, "I believe we could work you into our act; then you could go around with us now and then this summer if you made out well and if your mother and father are willing."

Papa said go ahead, said he would like to do a turn himself if the theatrical people would let him sing his famous bath-room solo; but mama was kind of doubtful. Mrs. O'Shea said it was only for a lark for the child—I said out loud that I was no child, but no one paid any attention to me—and let her try it once or twice, anyway, the darling! So mama did.

And we rehearsed up in Mrs. O'Shea's room two or three mornings. You remember Mr. and Mrs. O'Shea sit in front of a make-believe fire-

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place with a red light in it on the stage when the curtain goes up, in great fine soft chairs because they are supposed to be rich now, though Mr. O'Shaughnessy—that is his name on the stage, you remember—used to be a poor bricklayer, a long time ago. You remember how they begin talking jolly to each other in that thick, fuzzy way of theirs; and how Mrs. O'Shaughnessy wants him to wear a black frock coat and gray striped trousers all the time, and to stop smoking a pipe and to smoke cigarettes, and to move up-town from the East Side, and to act like *somebody*. He won't do it, so after a lot of talk back and forth, as you recollect of course, they begin to quarrel and in the end Mrs. O'Shaughnessy runs out to the kitchen and brings back a lot of plates and things to throw at him, which she does.

Well, I don't do a thing while most of that is going on but sit in a chair by the make-believe fireplace with the red light in it pretending to play with a silly doll, which I never did like even when I was a child. I always liked kittens and dogs and pigeons and live things. Anyway, Mrs.

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O'Shaughnessy keeps pointing at me and saying, "fer th' sake o' yer child, will ye heed me, Mike?" And he says things about me too. But I just keep on playing with the doll. But when Mrs. O'Shaughnessy breaks the first plate, I jump up, put my hands to my ears, and scream and scream and scream. They say they never heard any one anywhere scream more naturally than I do. They say I am a *perfect* screamer. In the end I rush to the window and shout, "Police! Police!" three or four times.

I have been on six or seven times already. It is lots of fun. I see the funniest people behind the scenes at the theaters. Women and men in tights. People with trained dogs, cats, ponies, and every kind of animal nearly. One man has a troupe of trained fleas. Anyway, he says they are trained. Then there are people with more kinds of musical instruments than anybody ever heard of. And I like all these people too.

I have been on in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Hoboken, Newark, and up in the Bronx. Once when we were down in a Fourteenth Street theater, and after our turn was over at night, Mr.

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O'Shea said we would celebrate at Lüchow's. And I remembered when Breaksteel had the hasenpfeffer, which is short for rabbit, is n't it? Do you remember our celebration when mama was out of danger at the hospital?

And do you know, Jim, I am supposed to be a very young girl on the stage, not more than thirteen. I asked Mrs. O'Shea if she thought I could make up to look so young, but she said that was the test of a good actress, to be able to look young. They say I make up to look not a day over thirteen, if that. I shortened that voile dress with the blue dots in it, you remember. It had already drawn up some in the wash, but I shortened it at least an inch more. I felt like everybody was looking at my legs in that short dress. But papa said not to worry because Miss Febber is n't in it any more for handsome legs. You remember how skinny I used to be. Miss Febber brought me the loveliest pair of blue silk stockings from the place where she works. Oh, I am having lots of fun on the stage. And I let down my hair and have it curled.

But just listen to me. I am talking *all* about

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myself. Anyway, Jim, you know that whether I am at home with Breaksteel or with my pigeons on the roof or down in the kitchen with good old Li Teo Po or on the stage with the O'Sheas I am always thinking of you. If I see anything that makes me laugh or anything very pretty or anything that just makes me look at it a long time in wonder, I think how much more I should like it if Jim could be there with me.

I never told you before about my going on the stage because I wanted to find out if I did all right first, because I knew you would be excited by thinking I might make a failure. But, Jim, if you don't want me to be on the stage I won't go on with the O'Sheas any more. You must tell me what you think about it. Of course I will stop when school begins anyway, except maybe some Saturday afternoons or nights.

But it *is* all kinds of fun, and the O'Sheas are so pleased. They say they have been doing their act exactly the same way for so many years that having me in it is like a vacation at the seashore. And then of course I don't go on every day and night as the O'Sheas do; only two or

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three times a week when they are at a big theater. And my name on the stage is Winnie O'Shaughnessy. What do you think of that? Is n't it a whale of a name though? Next to Pickett and Fippany, I like it very much.

The nicest pigeon you see in Washington tomorrow will be me come down to visit my husband, and you must throw her some peanuts shelled by yourself, and not that kind with salt on them which kills birds.

Don't work too hard, Jim, and take care of yourself and keep on writing to me. If I did n't get something from you every day I reckon I would just about lose my reason. Good night, Jim; and now my ring is turned, so you must come and kiss me.

Your loving wife,

ADDIE.

DEAR JIM:

So you will be back in less than a week now. I am so excited I don't know what to do scarcely. Last night I was on the stage again over in Jersey City, and when it was time for me to run to the

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window and shout, "Police!" I shouted, "Jim! Jim! Jim!" But the audience did n't seem to know any better, or something, because they applauded us even more than usual. The audiences all love the O'Sheas, though lots of people must have seen them often. The other actors we meet say their act is one of the most popular on the metropolitan circuit. It never goes flat, they say, and it looks as if they will keep on playing it forever until they can play no more.

Papa must be doing very well in his business over in Long Island City. I have been over to his warehouse a lot of times. There's a big sign on the front of it saying, "Fippany For Any Old Thing." I asked him what it meant. "Nothin' much now, Addie," he answered. "I have n't enough stock. It's a promise. Some day it'll mean a lot to a great many people." But he is very cheerful, and whistles and sings at home, and outside he wears his felt hat low over his left eye and looks kind of impudent, especially when he walks and bends his shoulders from side to side, as I often see little boys do when they are aching for a fight or have just had one.

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Mama is doing fairly well. She has n't been bad sick since the operation. But she complains that she is getting stouter all the time.

And you will never know me, Jim, when you come back. I am doing my hair different. I have a new dress. And Major Rossmore says going on the stage has been a great advantage to me. He vows that I have almost perfect poise and a new grand air about me and a lot more of such nonsense. But I do feel a little different. It's my new dress and my new way of doing my hair, though, that will throw you off at first. But at the station you will know me because Breaksteel will be with me. Old Breaksteel is just the same. You'll be sure to know him. If you don't he will know you anyway, and jump all over your clothes and everything. And so will I.

Everybody keeps asking when you are coming home, Miss Febber especially.

Next Wednesday afternoon at two o'clock at the Pennsylvania Station! To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow! Will it ever come? And then next year I must go away to school too. Let's you and I get right back on the train next

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Wednesday and go away to that log house in the deep woods by the stream that sings, and never be separated any more.

Your room is all ready for you. It has new curtains and is spick and span from toe to top-knot. Even Li Teo Po is excited, and I never saw him excited before. He is going to have for Wednesday dinner that dish of okra and rice and tomatoes and Virginia ham you like so well, and a lot more things besides. He tells me about it every night.

You will have to give me a new ring, Jim, because I have turned it so much to bring you to me that it is almost worn out, I reckon. (Oh, yes, you warned me to stop saying reckon for suppose. Well, I will when I go away to that fancy college, as papa calls it. Let me talk as I will now. I am on vacation anyhow.)

Good night, my Jim, and don't fail to write me to-morrow. I am so happy I am almost crying here in my room, but I reckon—I suppose, I mean—I am after all just a silly little old girl. And now I turn my ring and you are here. Jim, do you love me as much as you did when you went

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away? I love you more, if that is possible, which it is not.

Your loving wife,

ADDIE.

Well, and when Wednesday afternoon came I was on the proper Pennsylvania train. Getting off at the Jersey City station, I had n't the least difficulty in recognizing Addie even if she had n't been convoyed by the unmistakable Mr. Fippany, Breaksteel, and Mrs. Rossmore. Breaksteel and Addie threw themselves on me at the same time, but I managed them both.

Then there was the dinner at which Li Teo Po outdid himself and at which all the remunerative guests were so unaffectedly cordial that I felt something like a returned conqueror, though goodness knows I was but an overworked mediocre newspaper man coming back from a summer job in a city that is not at its best in the summer-time.

CHAPTER XXII

—A Wife Goes To College

As this narrative gets old time flies too fast, as it does over the heads of aging men and women. So far my early morning hours with it here in the dimmed stillness of the "Star" office have been on the whole happy ones. With all the ceiling lights turned off, to be turned on again when the scrub-women come in at five o'clock, and only my green-hooded desk-light burning, my valetudinarian but loyal old Remington and I have worked with joyous content on this chronicle.

But its current is hurrying me on to events which I wish were not there. I wish it would not come to them any faster than is necessary. But it is irresistible, as time is, and it must go on to what was and what must be in this narrative if it is to serve its purpose. I gather from my

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psychoanalytic authorities that if the confession is not honestly complete it might as well not have been made so far as any benefit to me is concerned.

We come now to Addie's last year at high school, and it rushes by for both her and for me. To her I am eloquent about the desirability of college. Look, I say, it is only for three or four years after all. Poughkeepsie is but two hours from New York, so that she can come down for the week-end once a month at least. I assume that the school people will permit that, but I am afraid to inquire lest I find I am wrong. Yes, and then there are the long vacations. Yes, yes, Jim, she says, and tightens her arms about my neck, but could n't she, oh, could n't she, get along without college? Would I love her any more if she becomes a Vassar graduate? And may the mighty bookkeeper above the clouds forgive me, but I lie atrociously when I say, "Well, just a little perhaps."

And I go to my room and wonder if I am not a madman to let her go. But I thunder over and over again to myself; "She must have her

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chance. She has n't really seen any one but you yet."

Yes, the year rushes by. Mr. Fippany's great idea grows prodigiously. He has so many chances to gamble in business, and does it so well, that he is radiantly active. He is a gay, gallant little figure, now always dressed in shaggy, smoky-smelling, light-toned tweeds that go so well with his shaggy brown eyebrows and his ruddy face and his brown felt hat. I expect him soon to begin carrying a cane, to dramatize the fact of his new position in the commercial world.

Mrs. Fippany, becoming ever stouter and less active, continues keeping the remunerative guests, though they are not needed now except as guests. She says she would be lonesome without them now, or at least some of them. I find an opportunity to suggest that Major Rossmore and Mrs. Rossmore and the O'Sheas be kept on for the joy of their presence but that the rest be let go. When I mention Miss Febber as one who could be let go Mrs. Fippany opens her eyes wide for just a second, and I think I see them flash. But

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she makes no decision, and the guests stay on. They are no great trouble after all. Li Teo Po and a newly recruited Polish maid of the name of Alize Bziak do all the work; Mrs. Fippany is a managing director.

She sits a great deal in her room by a window, her black brooding eyes staring out of it at nothing in particular. Sometimes coming home at an unusual hour in the afternoon to pack my grip for an out-of-town assignment, I find her sitting there alone. She, who wanted to desert the long white roads for the streets of New York, seems not nearly so happy as Mr. Fippany, who did not want to come. At times I fancy she spends those still, unnumbered hours seeking to solve by sheer thinking some problem that cannot be solved except by acting or by the drift of circumstance. Perhaps she feels that in some mysterious way she can affect the drift of circumstance by willing that things go this way or that.

She has forbidden Addie to slide down the brass pole in her nightgown to talk to me early

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in the morning, as she used to do without question. Mrs. Fippany says Addie is too big a girl now for that sort of thing. So Addie tells me. She must dress, which is out of the question of course, or stay in bed. That is the order.

But though I verbally uphold the wisdom of Mrs. Fippany's command, there are times when Addie forgets it. Waking up often when I come in, she is sliding, still half asleep, down the pole before she remembers the prohibition; and then she concludes it is too late to go back. Anyway, Mrs. Fippany is a heavy sleeper, and Mr. Fippany believes that whatever Addie does is right and that a tattletale is a person of no account whatsoever.

With me Addie is entirely unselfconscious about her body. In a way she has grown up with me, or at least close by me. On the trip up here from Louisiana she and Mr. Fippany and I bathed together in many a cool stream at the end of a hot dusty day. And later, at the time when girls are growing keenly conscious of their girls' bodies, Addie was already looking upon me as one so much a part of herself that,

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with me, the instinctive guards of modesty were as instinctively dropped.

In the winter I could always cover her up with my overcoat without making her self-conscious, but during this summer before she goes away to college, when she is sixteen, she often sits during our early morning whispering talks in her night-gown with her knees drawn up to her chin, just as she did when she was that little girl of long, long ago. I seem to see her now stealing into the dining-room blinking her sleep-laden eyes in the sudden light, one hand at her forehead, the finger-tips of the other at her lips, her hair a black avalanche down her back.

As if still she suffers from the fancied reproach of being "only a kid," she calls enthusiastic attention to anything she can make appear as evidence of her growing up. She has n't the slightest hesitation about pulling her gown above her knees and saying boastfully: "Look, Jim, at what my sixteen years and my exercises are doing for them. And when I go to college and get into all those games you tell me about, my legs will get to be too awful for anything, I'll bet. They

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will look like two sticks of hard wood, and silk stockings cannot save them, either."

And as for me, I take her in the spirit in which she takes herself, except now and then when some juncture of circumstances changes, in spite of all I can do, the appeal she has for me. For example, I look forward with delighted terror to our cautious trip up-stairs to her bedroom after I have snapped out the light in the dining-room.

As we go slowly up, as quietly as we can so that we shall not wake any one, especially Mrs. Fippany, she catches my right arm and pulls it around her waist. I feel her left breast against my body. Occasionally she stumbles in the dark and I must hold her more tightly still, she cautions me; and sometimes there in the blackness I find her standing on the step above me with her arms around my neck and her body leaning full against me. "Jim, Jim, kiss me," she whispers, "and then carry me up-stairs quick in your arms. I feel so strange, as if I were a tiny bit drunk. No, no, don't go yet; kiss me again, and let's stand here, just as we are, only a minute more."

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And when I have seen her into her room and have got safely into mine I breathe a wordless prayer of relief.

But this year, the last year before Addie goes away to college, rushes on. November with its clear cold and a flurry or two of snow, December with its razor-edge winds, January and February and March—truly awful months in New York!—with their snow and sleet and slush and ice and wind, April with its occasional soft day, May with its leap into the new-born greenness of summer—so the months go, and Addie and I, without planning to do so, excitedly contrive to be together as much as possible. We are like tourists pushed for time: we must make every minute count.

There is the graduation from high school, and all the people from Six-A House in the assembly-hall to see her, and she straining so hard to appear mature and yet so adorably, so magnificently young. She reads a paper on something or other—it means nothing to her, to me, to any one else. *She* means something, though: the audience applauds accordingly.

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In July I take my vacation. Leaving Six-A House to Li Teo Po and Alize Bziak, Mr. and Mrs. Fippany, Addie, and I go away down on Long Island, beyond the fashionable Southampton, to Amagansett, where the waves roll unusually high upon the sand and old fishermen talk of their whaling days. We are fresh-water folk and this is our first salt-water vacation. Addie and Mr. Fippany and I adapt our technique of swimming in still waters to these new high green waves. Mrs. Fippany sits tensely in a chair looking on. Addie and I walk across the country, among the old farms, finding now and then an ancient windmill come down from the days of the Dutch. Mr. and Mrs. Fippany do not walk; they sit on the front of the hotel in rocking-chairs; except that every two or three days Mr. Fippany goes back to town for an afternoon. On business, he explains. I wonder.

August is still ours, and we make the most of it in New York. I am a hard-driven working-man, doing overtime because it is the vacation season, but there is always time to be happy.

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Central Park in these its days of greenness is a near-by land of heart's delight. With even an hour to spare we can always do Central Park. After all, it does n't matter where we are—on top of a Riverside Drive bus, shooting up town on an elevated train, worming our way through the Broadway or Fifth Avenue crowds—so long as we are together.

Now comes September, now the night before the day on which Addie must absolutely take the train for Poughkeepsie. We have sat late talking with Mr. and Mrs. Fippany, Major Rossmore, and some of the others. They go to bed. Addie and I must have an hour to ourselves on the roof. We find two chairs and tilt them back against the low brick wall.

We feel that time is rushing us along so fast that we can speak only now and then, and breathlessly. Before the bells of midnight are done one o'clock is striking—or so it seems to us. We seem to be able to pay attention only to things that hurry. That is our mood. We mark each elevated train as it comes crashing out of the

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north and goes crashing into the south. We see the gray clouds running madly before some wild high wind that does not touch us. The night is dark and troubled.

"Jim, will you see that Li Teo Po takes care of my pigeons?"

"Yes, Addie."

"And Breaksteel. He is getting old."

"Yes, Addie, I will."

"And watch out for mama all you can. Dr. McLemore says she must n't have any shocks that can be avoided. Papa tells me that."

"I will do the best I can, Addie."

"Jim?"

"Yes, Addie."

"I had to have your ring made a little larger to-day, again. That's the third time now it's been enlarged. Pretty soon it will be a new ring. No, it won't either; it will always be the same to me. Do you remember, Jim, when you gave it to me and when, once, I gave it back to you?"

"Addie?"

"Yes, Jim."

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"I know you won't, but if you should ever feel that——"

"Hush, don't say it, Jim. I will not listen. Be quiet. I know it's that nonsense about my once having been a child. Now I am not a child. Once you were too; now you're not. All right; give me your hand. Now you say in your mind what you said that night when the wind waved the yellow candle-flame, and mama was sick, and Li Teo Po watched us. And so will I say it. There! I said it. Did you?"

"Yes, Addie."

"Now here is the ring. Put it back on my finger. There, it is done all over again. Are you satisfied, Jim?"

"Within three years I shall be satisfied."

"Stand up, Jim. I will put my arms around your neck. Now listen. At the end of my freshman year you can have me if you want me. At the end of my second year you can have me. And if you want me now you can have me. I am yours for all time at any time."

The bells strike two. In my mind I keep thundering at myself, "*She must have her*

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chance," and so I say to her, a little roughly:
"Come, you are going to bed now. You travel
to-morrow."

And to-morrow is here—and gone. And New
York is a desolation and a desert.

CHAPTER XXIII

—*A Man Of Plumes*

A DESOLATION and a desert New York became indeed when Addie had gone away, suddenly transformed into an oasis when now and then she came back to town.

I took on the manners and customs of a newly married man. I became a miser, and my bank-account flourished as the celebrated green bay-tree. Reporters as a rule do not read newspaper advertisements; they affect a certain high scorn of their paper's business department and all its activities, which is nevertheless the department that pays their salaries. I came to be a seasoned reader of advertisements—about apartments, houses in the suburbs, lots upon which a Spanish castle was built by me in a night and deserted the next day, housewares, even about furniture, though I felt that my interest in store furniture was entirely academic. Addie and I would fur-

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nish with dear old things discovered in and rescued from auction-rooms.

But I bought nothing of course. That I planned to do when she should graduate, if everything went well for me in the meantime. I was now merely studying the ground, gathering the facts, planning an advance. Nor did I make any reference to Addie about these plans. I wanted her to feel absolutely free. If some favorite of fortune should flash across her path and become her hero she was not to feel that another man had been preparing a home for her. If I was to be deposed that would be hurt enough for her even when everything had been done to soften the decision.

Her first year in college went by without any indication that I was to be deposed. Her letters showed her, after the usual period of homesickness was over, radiantly happy, a trifle less demonstrative perhaps unless she was deeply moved, as steady in her devotion as a perfect college wife could be. She had plunged into the student games with fervor. Physically she was filling out even more rapidly than before; the substitu-

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tion of soft curves for uncountable straight lines was as swift as flower growth and as magically beautiful in effect. Her complexion was already as satin with faint pink shadows on her cheeks. They would never be more than faintly shadowed with pink; she is a creamy brunette.

Fired with boundless vitality, dressed with an easy smartness partly due to the stimulation of competition in college and partly perhaps to her inheritance of French blood, her black eyes as straightforward as a man's, intense, gay, gallant, and beneath a hundred surface changes and moods always at heart the same, that Vassar Addie comes back to me sometimes with such vividness that I groan.

Well, whatever has been or may be, nothing can rob me of the adorable little girl of the overland trip up here, of the little make-believe wife who wanted her ring, of the bewitching high-school girl who did n't want to go to college, of that incomparable, Southern, Gallic Addie of ten thousand allurements, that Addie of sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen.

But most precious of all the Addies to Old

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Long Emergency is the one who, whatever her age, slid down the old brass pole to sit in a chair by his side in the early morning with her knees pulled up to her chin, her hair down over her shoulders, and her sleep-heavy black eyes coming open to rock and dance with merriment or to open very wide in wonderment or to soften in quick pity and compassion—first the little comrade who wanted to keep me company and find out if I had come safely through the night in that terrible Tenderloin district, then the little woman who mothered me, and finally the swiftly blooming girl who was comrade and mother and sweetheart all in one. Yes, she did love me, and life is worth living just to say over and over again, knowing it is true, Addie once loved *me*.

Sometimes in a theater where she is playing, high up in the second gallery, I see her in a rôle that recalls some one of the many Addies of old. And to be able to see her and to hear her, hear her when her heart is in her voice—that, too, helps to make life worth living to Old Long Emergency.

But there was a season when I could bear to

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see her only once, and then I left the theater before the first curtain. The part she played demanded that she come on the stage early in the morning in her nightgown with her hair down. I am always at her first nights, and when she came in that way I rushed from the theater and never dared go back while she was appearing in that play.

But there, there, my business is to tell a straightaway story of myself and necessarily also of the chicken-wagon family. In nearly all her letters during her first year in college Addie cautioned me repeatedly to take especially good care of her mother. And paying added attention to Mrs. Fippany and everything that might affect her, I saw that Mr. Fippany, while his wife was growing ever stouter and less spirited, was falling a victim, no doubt an unconscious victim at first, to Miss Febber's skilful technique of physical allurements.

Mr. Fippany had soberly directed Addie, when any of her fancy friends at college asked her what her father did, to answer, "He's King of the Junkmen." Well, he was fast becoming the

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king of his business of wrecking and reselling; and more and more as the months went by the slogan, "Fippany For Any Old Thing," was adroitly rooted in the memory of New York. Unless something catastrophic happened, it was clear that Mr. Fippany, once a chicken-wagon man, later a jolly junkman, would very likely become a rich and powerful man before he was an old man.

No hint of the taint of an inferiority complex had ever troubled Jean Paul Baptiste Yvonne Fippany. He was never ashamed of his trading during his days on the long white road with his chicken-wagon, or of the rows of junkman's bells that advertised him when he first came to New York. But as in the old days when he had stuck red-headed matches and gray-spotted guinea-feathers in his hat-band and worn them as a plume, so now he was developing into a middle-aged dandy; not in any attempt to offset, in his own consciousness or in that of any one else, by his appearance, the weight of any ugly implications in the fairly appropriate title, King of the Junkmen, but because he had a flair for

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plumes and was now able to buy almost any kind he liked.

He liked good clothes, just a trifle gay. He patronized excellent tailors, hatters, haberdashers, and bootmakers, and he wore his raiment with an air. His hat was of a finer texture now than it once was, but it remained and always has remained a soft brown felt easily tilted to one side and pulled down over his left eye.

Mr. Fippany was always proud as well as jolly and gallant and gay and generous; now his pride rose, and there was excuse for its rising, and he carried himself as erect as a soldier on parade—not stiffly but proudly. Possibly, too, he felt he could use any addition of height that might be gained.

Mr. Fippany did not want all the plumes he was able to buy. He pressed money on Addie and praised her when she spent it. He encouraged Mrs. Fippany to buy more and more clothing, which she wore a few times to church and then hid away in closets, until finally that practical woman stopped doing that sort of thing and bought only what she wanted.

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He bought generously for Addie and Mrs. Fippany as well as for himself. He proposed that they desert Six-A House and move into a more pretentious neighborhood, a neighborhood with plumes of its own. But Mrs. Fippany resisted that. When Addie came home from college would be ample time to think about moving. In the meantime she preferred to rest easy where she was. And Addie, hearing of Mr. Fippany's proposal, vetoed it passionately. She would come back to Six-A House and no other. If Mr. Jean P. B. Y. Fippany had so much money to splurge with, she wrote, he could lay it aside for a certain important event not long in the future.

Of course Mr. Fippany, as his business increased, had to have an automobile, and indeed he needed it to get about rapidly to his various wrecking jobs and to and from Long Island City. But often at night I saw him on Broadway with Miss Febber on the front seat by his side. He had not yet achieved a chauffeur and swore he would never be bothered with one; he had driven his own vehicles too long for that. Often he drove up to Six-A House with Miss Febber at

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dinner-time; he had seen her coming home and had picked her up, he explained.

The guests of Six-A House, still paying but no longer remunerative, had dwindled in number during Addie's first year in college until only the Rossmores, the O'Sheas, and Miss Febber remained. At a favorable moment I again suggested guardedly to Mrs. Fippany that Miss Febber might be let go.

"No, Jim," she said, looking straight at me, "I'd rather have her here."

That appeared to be good strategy, and I let the matter rest. Though she knew that her gallant little husband was playing somewhat out of bounds, she had no idea how much and in how serious a mood he was playing. Nor did he, for that matter. He was always at home by midnight, and his excuses for lateness were uniformly plausible.

One winter night, coming home between eleven and twelve o'clock, I saw him stop his long, gray car two blocks from Six-A House and let Miss Febber out. She walked home. He drove around for ten minutes or so before coming in;

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he was then keeping the car in the stable, where Kit and Luce had been, they having been transferred to his big stable and garage at his plant. When he came in I was in the dining-room. He explained that he had been up to a building he was wrecking to put on a night-watchman in place of one who was drunk on the job. Well, maybe he had, maybe he had.

"Yes," I said, smiling, "you *need* a vigilant night-watchman, Mr. Fippany."

He gave me a prodigious wink, slapped me on the shoulder, and went up-stairs. No doubt he repeated up there his narrative of the watchman who was in such condition that he could not watch.

I was cheered by that wink of his. If he could achieve so villainous and wicked and entirely jolly a wink as that about Miss Febber, the situation was not, I thought, so serious as I had begun to fear, not yet at any rate; he being essentially a candid man.

CHAPTER XXIV

—About An Old Deer-Hound

WHEN Addie came home on her first summer vacation Mr. Fippany's conduct improved. I gathered that he could not then face the prospect of her high opinion of him falling the least little bit, and he knew that to Addie one of the cardinal sins was disloyalty. Besides, she supplied all the high spirits, all the gay jollity that Mr. Fippany could wish.

I saw little of Addie that summer. She and Mrs. Fippany went to the White Mountains for two months; she said her mother needed a rest and a long vacation, and she was determined Mrs. Fippany should have it. "You will forgive me, won't you, Jim?" she begged. "In a little while—you have said it is only a little while, you know—we shall have each other and all the time there is for us. I am worried about mama." Mr. Fippany was with them for a month and I

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for two weeks; I made it a point to be back in New York when he was.

And then the summer was over and Addie was gone again. And Mr. Fippany—devil take him, I swore to myself a thousand times—began his love-dancing about the hawk-nosed Miss Febber with the legs of a nymph.

Mr. Fippany is one of those people who have a fixed idea about the condition under which they think best. He was, and still is, I suppose, absolutely certain that nowhere does his mind work so effectively as when he sits on a spring-seat behind a pair of mules and before the two rows of his old junkman's bells driving slowly along the broad avenues of the East Side. And whenever he had an important decision to make in business, he gave the driver of one of his wagons a day off and wandered up and down the avenues east of Third Avenue and north of Fourteenth Street. At that time he kept the old Studebaker wagon in good repair and ever freshly painted chiefly for that purpose, I think; Kit and Luce he would have retained anyway. They were already in mule heaven; they were worked just

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enough to make them enjoy their rations, and the driver was almost tremulously aware of the fact that the boss was very fond of them.

One Monday night in the late spring of Addie's second year at college I left a note for Mr. Fippany asking him if he would not have Kit and Luce and the old Studebaker wagon brought over from Long Island City the next Wednesday morning at eleven o'clock; I wanted to drive with him during the afternoon, I said. That sort of an appointment, I knew, would warn him that I considered the coming interview most important.

And on the following Wednesday afternoon at two o'clock we were slowly jingling our way up First Avenue. From time to time some one hailed the dashing dandy who was driving the spick and span outfit that bore the musical bells of the junkman; perhaps some of them remembered it of old. Mr. Fippany laughed gaily and drove on.

As once before on this avenue Mr. Fippany had waited some time to broach the subject on his mind, so now I found myself waiting. And not

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until we were passing Forty-second Street did I begin.

"Mr. Fippany, what about this Febber woman anyhow?"

"Miss Febber is a very attractive young lady," he said; and because he did not smile but sat up stiffly and looked straight ahead, I shivered. Was I too late? Had I drifted too long? Had Addie trusted me in vain to look after her mother's best interests?

"Once before, Mr. Fippany, in this wagon, behind these mules and before those two rows of singing bells, I spoke to you of the dangerous age for men, for middle-aged men. Then you laughed. Now you sit up and freeze. You have reached the dangerous age."

I waited for him to say something, hoping at least for that softening of the face-muscles and that twinkling of the eyes which indicate a smile not far away. He viciously pulled his hat far down over his left eye and stared straight ahead again.

"Giddap, Kit; giddap, Luce." He irritably shook the lines.

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“The theory is, Mr. Fippany, that the upper reaches of middle age are dangerous for men because then they begin to get hints of their coming loss of vitality; and when some designing young woman, for purposes primarily of her own, crosses their trail, they go wildly bellowing off on that trail like an ornery old deer-hound who can’t resist a rabbit-scent when his business has been and still is to stick to the big trail.

“And that is not what the fancy rhetoricians call a perfect figure of speech, Mr. Fippany,” I went on, forcing a smile in the hope of drawing out one in return, “because the rabbit does *not* want to be chased while the young woman does, and the rabbit does *not* expect anything in the least profitable from the attentions of the chaser while the young woman is banking heavily on the chaser paying in several kinds of coin for his little run. Nor does the rabbit ever laugh at the fool deer-hound, but the young woman usually considers the dangerously aged man a silly old ass, to be chucked whenever it pleases her, and that is usually when she has stocked up fairly

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well at his expense and a younger man comes along."

"Minnie—Miss Febber—has n't chucked me yet, Jim," said Mr. Fippany soberly. "I don't seem to feel any danger of that."

"The old men rarely do."

"Now, look here, Jim. You an' me an' mine have been comrades a good long while. We've been through things together. I'll take more off you than off any other man alive. But there's a limit. An' even you have reached the limit when you begin sayin' insultin' things about Miss Febber. She's a friend of mine, an' no friend of mine must be insulted in my presence if I can help it."

"What, then, Mr. Fippany, is *your* opinion of Miss Febber?"

"She's a good girl; first I'll say that. I know. She is an attractive girl; she is an entertainin', high-spirited piece who can laugh an' josh, an' she's damned good company."

"All right, Mr. Fippany, let us assume, for the moment, that she is all you seem to think she is, and even more. If so, is it, considering the

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conclusions that people jump at, no matter how baselessly, chivalric of a safely married man to permit her, even if she is willing, to subject herself to hurtful criticism for the sake of entertaining him?"

"Well, she gets something out of it too. She gets a good time out of it; she enjoys herself."

"Is n't it possible that but for you she could find entertainment and give entertainment without laying herself liable to criticism?"

"Oh, Jim, you talk like a damned old nanny-goat. I don't think Miss Febber is lyin' awake at nights worryin' herself about criticisms of her conduct."

"I don't either, Mr. Fippany. She would n't."

"Well?"

"Well, yourself, Mr. Fippany. Leaving aside the question whether Miss Febber is hurt or not, what about Mrs. Fippany? Dr. McLemore says her heart is not strong and that she must be spared all worries and shocks possible to avoid."

"I ain't aimin' to shock Josephine, Jim. I am always in by midnight, an' I always have a good alibi. As for worries, some women seem to

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need to have 'em. If they have n't got real ones they 'll manufacture some out of whole cloth."

"And so you are sparing Mrs. Fippany the trouble of manufacturing hers. You *are* generous. But then you owe her nothing, do you? She has n't stood by you through thick and thin, has she? She is not primarily responsible, is she, for bringing you up here where you are making the money that enhances all your dear young charms to a certain sort of person?"

"Oh, go to hell, Jim. I'm not tremblin' on the brink of hell-fire. You talk like the Rev. Mr. Marcus Malebar of the Methodist Church, away down yonder in Louisiana. I come back to town at night tired an' worn out, an' lookin' for a laugh an' a good josh an' a happy partner to see a show with, or to take a few drinks with, or to take a drive up the road with; I find one an' do them things—an' no more, mind you—an' here you go preachin' a funeral oration over me an' my family."

"No, I have n't mentioned Addie yet, Mr. Fippany. She has n't the slightest idea of what is going on, though Mrs. Fippany has of course.

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Well, what about Addie? Could you talk to her as you have just talked to me, Mr. Fippany?"

"No, Jim; she is a child."

"She was; she is not."

"Well, anyway, she would n't understand now. Maybe if she was forty years old or so she would. But she is n't goin' to know anything about it."

"She is n't going to stay in college until she is forty or so, Mr. Fippany."

"I never said she was, Jim. Damn it, you 're beginnin' to file my nerves. Forget it. We 're in Central Park now. Let 's be quiet a while an' watch the people pass. That policeman down there is goin' to tell me to get this junk-wagon to hell out of here. An' so I will when I come to the lower end of the park."

And when we turned into our street I said: "Do you remember, Mr. Fippany, that other time when Addie came flying down the street to meet us? You are a hero to her still, a magically splendid sort of person."

Mr. Fippany did not answer, but the next morning, before he left the house, he came into my room, shut the door and put his back against

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it, and smiling broadly cupped his hands about his mouth and whispered across the room at me in bed, "Jim, the old deer-hound is off rabbit trails for good."

"You have escaped the dangerous age, Mr. Fippany?"

Not a great while after that Addie came home for her second summer vacation, and the situation seemed doubly safe.

CHAPTER XXV

—*The Rabbit-Trail Again*

I BELIEVE I know what was in the mind of Miss Febber in her campaign against, or possibly with reference to, Mr. Fippany, and no one outside of herself should be more able to say than myself. He was a dashing, jolly, generous, most companionable dangerous-ager. His theater-tickets, his gifts of jewelry and perfumes and other expensive small things were to Miss Febber no doubt worth considering, but she was too sophisticated to fancy that they could continue without her paying the price usually demanded and usually paid, unless she sprang a trap.

I do not at all believe that Miss Febber looked with satisfaction upon the prospect of becoming Mr. Fippany's mistress. She could have played from the beginning, and was willing to play, for younger game, provided he was n't, in her opinion, poverty-stricken. I am sure that somewhere

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in the back of her mind there was a picture of herself as co-respondent in a divorce trial and soon thereafter as the wife of the King of the Junkmen and the mistress of his almost certain ultimate wealth. And meanwhile, and incidentally only, whatever was in the future for her, she did most keenly enjoy the exercise of her skill in the incitation of men. She took a pride, I think, in overcoming the handicap of her hawk face and her pale eyes and hair and complexion. Mr. Fippany was, as I know now and suspected then, but one of several specimens with whom she was experimenting.

Miss Febber was aware of the fact that her spell worked weakly when Addie was in the house, and that second summer she let pass without any large effort in Mr. Fippany's direction. But as soon as Addie had left for her last year in college Miss Febber was in the field against the King of the Junkmen. And now she was pushing the campaign hard to bring on a decision before the coming summer.

Mr. Fippany was no longer as chummy with me as he had been. He really avoided me. But

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the news that people want to read and that newspapers must therefore print runs up and down Broadway more thickly than any other street in America, and the New York newspaper man doing general assignments probably spends more time on that street than on any other. So, too, do the men and women, many of them pathetic dangerous-agers, who are feverishly straining to condense into one year ten years of what they fancy is "good times," because they have usually missed them at an earlier age through no virtue of their own. I saw Mr. Fippany and Miss Febber more often than ever now, and the way she leaned over him at the table in a restaurant and against him as they walked in and out, and in general the assured possessive air about her when she was with him, all indicated to me that she believed her campaign was almost won.

Mr. Fippany had been sincere in his implied promise to me and to his many promises no doubt to himself, but, like most Americans, he was really, though a husband and a father, as ignorant of the whole matter of sex

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as a child. He had n't the faintest idea of the technique of sex attraction, of the cataclysmic power of sex, of the simplicity and quickness of its defeat when that defeat is both desirable and desired.

When Addie came home for her Christmas holiday she kept asking me: "Jim, what *is* it that is worrying mama so? I am frightened." I evaded a truthful answer, and determined to checkmate Miss Febber at almost any cost for six months, until Addie should be back in town for good. I felt that a divorce scandal would hurt Addie cruelly and break Mrs. Fippany.

And when Addie had gone back to Poughkeepsie I set in to make love to Miss Febber. I must give myself the credit of having had sense enough to suspect that probably Mr. Fippany would be incited all the more by a rival known to be in the field; but I knew also that he was a high-tempered, prideful person who made quick decisions. I worked on the theory that there was a chance that if she humbled him too much he would flare up, tell her in effect to go to hell,

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break away, and stay away. He was so ignorant that he did not realize that the moment he had begun thinking of Miss Febber as a "good girl" he was, considering the fact that he was married, in the very greatest danger. I determined that somehow, if at all possible, I would make him believe that she was—well, what she was. I was gambling on his pride and temper.

No, I am not a sacrificial hero. I had no definite plan at first except to induce her, if I could, to break dates with him and go with me. I was agonizingly conscious of the fact that there was danger to me so far as Addie was concerned; but if it came to a pinch, I reassured myself, I would tell Addie all the facts in the case. I trusted that she would believe me. Looking back, I see that it was a mistake not to take her into my confidence at the very beginning; but I did so want her to finish her time at college, and I did want even more to save her good opinion of her father.

I am sure I should not have been so successful with Miss Febber if there had n't grown up about me, at Six-A House, that legend of great wealth.

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Among the remunerative guests the opinion prevailed that I was working more for experience than for anything else and that I had inherited moneys which had increased prodigiously, and lands which had grown magically in value. I don't remember whether it was oil or sugar-cane that had made my lands so valuable. Some of the more imaginative of the guests were sure that when I had learned the business of making a newspaper I would buy an interest in one. These legends often grow up about people, especially quiet people of the type that are usually characterized as "queer customers."

Well, Miss Febber made dates with Mr. Fippany and then broke them on some flimsy excuse. I would telephone her that I happened to have a night off and must have Mr. Fippany's date or none; she could go with him almost any time, I argued.

The first effects of my manœuvres were appalling. Mr. Fippany seemed to lose his reason, his pride, and his ordinary common sense. When she and I went to a theater he sat near, having without any trouble found out from her

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where we were going. He would follow us from the theater to a restaurant and drop in on us at supper, saying, with a scowl in Miss Febber's direction, "Oh, Jim don't mind; I'll join you." And then he would stare viciously at me every time he caught my eye. At this stage he was literally showering presents on Miss Febber.

One Wednesday in February I telephoned her because I knew she had some sort of date with Mr. Fippany for that night. No, she could not break this one, she declared. She was a little cold to me, and I was suspicious.

And when I got home for dinner Mrs. Fippany, explaining the two empty chairs at the table, said that Mr. Fippany had gone to Philadelphia for several days on business and that Miss Febber was staying with friends for the rest of the week.

One of the things that a newspaper man must always be prepared to do is to decide quickly and act the next instant. Even so instinctive a drifter as I had profited by the discipline of my office, and in this case I was keyed up to a high pitch.

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“Well, Six-A House will be somewhat deserted for the rest of the week, Mrs. Fippany,” I said easily. “I ’m feeling a bit off and am going to Atlantic City for three or four days. I am sick of snow and slush and ice and sleet and ever more snow. It’s always pleasant at Atlantic City, according to the advertisements.” And I gave her the name of the hotel I should be staying at, though for weeks I had not thought of Atlantic City. Snatching a bite of dinner and packing my bag, I went in search of Miss Febber and her victim.

CHAPTER XXVI

—*What Hell Is Paved With*

As the stream of this narrative reaches that night in February, it sweeps back over me with the vividness of the actual present.

It was snowing again, the sixth snow since Christmas, as I went sloshing along Twenty-third Street toward Madison Square. The night shift of snow-shovelers was at work, and the horses and wagons were slipping on the old icy coating hidden by the new white flakes, and now and then some poor horse suddenly fell sidewise with a thud and a groan. The atmosphere reeked with wetness. The street-lights burned with a luminous halo around them. A passing taxicab splashed me with a spray of gray slush.

At Madison Square I took a taxicab. Inside, with my bag on the seat by my side, and the taxi rocking like a sea-going tug as it went coughing up Broadway, I said, "Where am I going?" Well, I was going to find Mr. Fippany and Miss

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Febber first. Having found them, I did not know exactly what I was going to do. But if they were prepared to leave town, so was I.

Mr. Fippany had a preference, I knew, for Shanley's at Forty-second Street. He liked its easy-going atmosphere. Good; I knew the waiters there too. In whatever corner he might be hidden I could find him. I suspected that he would be having dinner there. He hated dining-car menus. At the door of the restaurant the hat-boy told me that Mr. Fippany and a lady—yes, *the* lady—were up-stairs, second floor. I told the taxi to wait. If I should need one I wanted to be sure one was there for me at that very moment. I knew that on stormy nights taxis cannot be had instantly, even at Broadway and Forty-second Street.

I left my hat and coat and bag with the boy and went on up-stairs. Mr. Fippany received me with a frown; Miss Febber was pleasant but not pleased. She was dressed for traveling. I remember her warm-hued homespun suit, so well chosen to make the most of her eyes and complexion.

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"Let me come in," I said, smiling. "I am lonesome. I'm on my way to Atlantic City. I need a rest. I have n't a thing to do for an hour. I've had a little dinner, in a hurry, but I'll sit in with you two if you won't mind. Maybe I can do another dinner."

A quart of champagne sat in an ice-pail by the table, and roast guinea-hen was coming, I was told. Mr. Fippany and Miss Febber had had cocktails and oysters. "Let's have another round of Martinis," I suggested, "and then I'll skip the oysters and join you with the fish."

After this second cocktail Miss Febber was more pleasant and Mr. Fippany more ferocious. It occurred to me that the more clear-headed she was the more inclined she was to Mr. Fippany. So I suspected that she had planned a coup, the hoped-for result to be some sort of tacit trade of her supposed status of "good girl," as the simple-minded Mr. Fippany thought her, for a promise on his part, which she had good reason to believe would be kept. I could almost see in her mind that picture of herself in the rôle of correspondent and then of wife.

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Mr. Fippany was furious and gulped his champagne. I pressed Miss Febber to have more, and ordered another quart. Every art of allurements that I had ever heard of that may be practised in a corner of a well-lighted restaurant I attempted, no doubt with supreme stupidity; but then Miss Febber and her victim were slightly befuddled already, so they did n't notice my awkwardness in this unpleasant business. It was a game, and I was playing it as hard as I could. I felt that the happiness of Mrs. Fippany and therefore of Addie was at stake. I thought, too, of Mr. Fippany. We were comrades. A divorce mess—and newspaper men cannot help knowing about the ugly details attending such things—would hurt all three of my friends. I was not playing against Mr. Fippany; I was playing against Miss Febber. In the back of my mind was the determination to discredit her in Mr. Fippany's eyes and at once.

I reached for her knee with mine. She drew hers away. I reached again. She let mine rest against hers. Then she pressed it hard. I

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dropped my cigarette-case and stooping quickly looked to see where her other knee was; it was at a safe distance from Mr. Fippany's, he sitting opposite me. And when his eyes were momentarily turned I fluttered my eyelid at Miss Febber, feeling like a fool, and she came back with a villainous, lecherous, alcoholic wink.

Mr. Fippany must be got out of the way for a few minutes, I told myself. "Mr. Fippany," I said, "the driver of Kit and Luce called up while I was at Six-A House. He said Kit was very sick, and he wanted you to phone him what to do. He said he would stay with her until she got better. He was in a blue funk."

"Colic, I'll bet," snapped Mr. Fippany. "The fool's been feedin' her wrong. I've told him a thousand times to watch the corn especially. I don't know why it's so bad this year, but it is. Be back in five minutes. Why did n't the damned fool 'phone the veterinary?"

I knew there were only two telephone-booths, both on the first floor; he would use the one in the bar-room.

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As soon as his back was turned I said to Miss Febber: "Atlantic City? Why bother with him? Come on."

She laughed. I could n't hesitate. Within five minutes Mr. Fippany would know that I had tricked him. Laying hold of Miss Febber's arm, I jumped up, pulling her with me. "Come on; we've got to move fast."

The cocktails and champagne had done noble service, I thought. Giggling, she followed me. "Mr. Fippany will be back in a minute," I told the waiter. "Say we'll see him later."

"Considerably later," added Miss Febber.

With the bubbling Miss Febber hanging on my arm, I rushed down-stairs. I grabbed both her large bag and my comparatively small one. The hat-boy knew us and let hers go, though it was on Mr. Fippany's check. We leaped into my taxi-cab.

"The Twenty-third Street Ferry as fast as this muck will let you go," I whispered to the chauffeur.

As I got in I saw Mr. Fippany looking out through the door of the restaurant at us.

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We went rocking down Broadway, then into Sixth Avenue, and west through Twenty-third Street.

Before midnight we were in Atlantic City. I took two rooms and a bath at the hotel I had mentioned to Mrs. Fippany. I planned to make that second room my deliverance.

CHAPTER XXVII

—*I Am No Hero*

I WAS not sure whether Mr. Fippany would follow us to Atlantic City or not. If, happily, he did n't, I could well believe that his temper and pride had already cured him. If he should follow us the cure would be effected there, if a cure was at all possible. It should appear to him that his "good girl" was no such thing and that, as I had warned him, she did not hesitate about chucking him on a moment's notice for a younger man. If this medicine, this desperate medicine, did n't cure him, he was incurable.

My plan of action was now worked out in some detail. I had done that on the way down to the sea-shore, as often I had planned a campaign to get a difficult out-of-town newspaper story after having left New York with only a name and an address to work on.

I professed to be as hungry as a wolf as soon

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as we had arrived. We got rid of two hours in the lonely grill-room; the hotel was not at all populous during that abominable weather, which Atlantic City had not escaped. Before leaving the table I was already complaining of a bad stomach. I had been careful to eat something different from Miss Febber's order. That caviar sandwich, I said, might very well be the end of poor Pickett. The best food in America was in New York City; a man should be on his guard when he ate fancy things far away from Times Square. Miss Febber was sympathetic and apparently not at all suspicious.

Entering our suite on the fifth floor, fronting the sea, we saw a small private hall with a lounge in it. On the left was a bath-room. On the right were the two bedrooms.

"This was all I could get on the sea side," I explained. "But this extra room will give our quarters an air of spaciousness. It was this or nothing, nothing worth having. Anyway, I thought I might be horribly sick to-night, and this extra bedroom may be very welcome to us. You take over that far room now. I am going

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to lie down in this one for a few minutes." I lay across the bed with my clothes on.

From time to time I simulated a groan that should have been convincing. After a while Miss Febber came in. She had gotten off her suit and wore a kimono. She was—and still is, I am sure—a passionate and tasteful lover of silks. I remember that kimono. It was a gorgeous, unusual yellow with huge, dark red, fantastic flowers for the pattern.

"I'm going to 'phone for the hotel doctor, Jim."

"No, no, don't do any such thing. He'll just give me medicine. Then I'll be sick for a week. Let me alone, won't you? I'll drink a glass or so of hot water to-night. In the morning I'll take a good stiff chaser, and that will be the end of my fish troubles."

"Just as you say, Jim." She was suddenly, I thought, a trifle acid. She started out of the room.

"It's a rotten shame, Minnie, to bring you down here to act as nurse to a sick man. But I'll make it up to you sometime. Forgive me this

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once. I'll be all right to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow. Trust me; I know. You go on to sleep. I'll be all right. I'll get up and undress after a while, as soon as you're through with the bath-room, and go to bed."

She went on across the hall to the bath-room.

I was planning to be a sick man through the night, to be convalescent the next day, and to cut out for New York early the following night, taking her with me if she wanted to go. If Mr. Fippany were going to follow us he would have ample time by the next night. He would already have returned, I felt sure, to Six-A House explaining to his wife that he had found that he could transact his business by telephone, after all; he would be told the name of my hotel by Mrs. Fippany; and if he meant to come at all he would lose no time. Whether he did follow us or not, I was fixed in my determination to be back in New York the next night. There were several letters of Addie's in my pocket; these I pressed frequently with my arm and felt safe.

I did not forget that Mrs. Fippany was going to connect my absence with that of Miss Febber.

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She had seen evidences of my counter-attack on Miss Febber without understanding what she saw; and while she would have absolved Mr. Fippany by this time, she would be thinking abominable things of me. Perhaps she would not be sorry if—but, there, I must not think of Addie's mother that way, ambitious though she was. At any rate, whatever happened, I kept saying to myself, "On a pinch I'll tell Addie everything, and I'll trust her to believe me."

I heard Miss Febber in the next room bustling about with her preparations for bed. After a while she opened the door between the two rooms, stuck her head through it, and, smiling, said: "Good night, old sick man. Hope you'll be better to-morrow. If you need me any time call me. I'll leave the door a little ajar. How do you feel now?"

"Pretty rotten, but I'll be all right to-morrow. You'll see. Good night."

When the lights in her room were out I went to the bath-room, got ready for bed, groaned at judicious intervals, turned out the remaining lights, and went to bed.

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It was still snowing with occasional intervals of rain and sleet. I lay listening to the soft slap of the snowflakes against the window-panes and the sharper attacks of the rain and sleet every now and then. It came to me that, whatever happened, my days at Six-A House were over; and that was a loss, for I had come to love the ancient fire-engine house and everything in it, almost everybody in it.

I began speculating upon where I should live until Addie came back from college and we set up our own establishment. If indeed I should not have lost Addie. The impulse seized me to get up a little later and leave a note for Miss Febber saying I was frightened and was hurrying back to New York to get to a doctor I knew and was sure of. But then Mr. Fippany might possibly come down the next day. That was doubtful, but having gone this far it would be foolish of me not to make absolutely sure that Mr. Fippany's cure should be complete. He must have all the evidence before his eyes if he did come. Besides, I did not like the idea of deserting, in just that way, even Miss Febber.

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After about an hour I saw the lights go on in her room. She came into mine, leaving the door wide open so that there was light to see her way about. She sat down on the side of my bed.

"Jim, I simply *can't* go to sleep. Too much champagne back in New York, I guess. Let me sit here a while and talk. It will make you forget your aches and pains, maybe, and pretty soon I'll get sleepy."

There was no hint of a smile in her eyes or about the corners of her mouth. Her voice was gentle and sympathetic now. She rolled back the right sleeve of her flesh-colored gown and began rubbing her hand over that marvelous column of perfectly molded whiteness. I remember saying to myself with a curious emphasis, "*It is beautiful.*"

She flexed her arm and felt the healthy mound of muscle just below the shoulder. "Feel that, Jim. That's not bad for an indoor worker, is it? I do my exercises as regularly as a slave. I have to to keep fit. My job depends on my shape; I protect what I've got. Feel."

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I put my fingers perfunctorily around her arm and lay back down.

I had turned off the radiators and raised my windows as much as the storm would permit. "You'll get cold," I warned her. "That thin silk is no protection against cold. Better get back to your warm bed."

"No, it's still too warm in these rooms. That's one reason why I can't sleep. And you can't raise the windows much without letting in rivers. Besides, I put my stockings on. See!"

She raised both her legs and pulled her gown up to her knees.

"Well, forgive me," I said, "for turning my back, but the light hurts my eyes. Go ahead talking if you must. I'll hear you."

"No," she said impulsively, "I'm going to do my bedtime exercises. I've done them once, but it will be all to the good to do a second set. I'll turn on the lights so you can see how a lady keeps her shape. Maybe you'll forget your ailments for a moment. That will do you good too. Look."

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Raising my head on clasped hands, I watched her. Right and left she bent her supple body, twenty times, she counted; then twenty times she slowly turned her magnificent trunk on her hips, her upstanding breasts outlined against the clinging silk of her nightgown. Standing still and lifting her gown to give her freedom of movement, she raised her right knee to her chin, twenty times; then her left knee. Her white round arms flowed out of the ample sleeves as she lifted them in easy practised movements. She was grace and strength and fire. As she went through her exercises the silk about her body gave off more of the exquisite perfume of which I had had faint intimations already.

She paused, a little out of breath, her eyes shining.

“That ’s not bad, is it, Jim, for an office slave? We ’re supposed to be namby-pamby things, you know, we office people.”

“Good work, Minnie! You ’re all right. Now scoot! I feel like the deuce, and besides I want that light out. You ’re prepared for a good

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sleep now. Furthermore, the room *is* cold. I feel it covered up as I am."

Once more she turned off my light, said "Good night," and went back to her room. I saw, with a deep sigh of relief, her light go out.

It must have been now nearly 3 A. M. I lay listening drowsily to the rain and sleet and snow slapping and patting at the window-panes. Not far away I heard the sea sliding up on the white shore with a mighty "Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Possibly an hour had passed when I felt that some one was standing by my bed. I caught again the odor of faint perfume in my nostrils. The room was thick with darkness, and nowhere was there a sound except that of the storm outside.

"Jim, I'm cold. There's not enough cover on my bed. Move over; I'm going to get in with you. Two are warmer than one. My teeth are chattering. Move over, I tell you. You can keep me warm even if you have got a tummy-ache."

I moved, turning my back to her.

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"Minnie, please get up and 'phone the office for the doctor. I feel like the very dickens, and I'm getting worse, I know I am. You were right; I should have called him in the beginning."

"Oh, hush, Jim. It's too late now to call for the doctor. It'll be day in a few hours. You've got nothing but a tummy-ache, anyhow. Besides, you must be some better, because I haven't heard you groan for an hour. Golly, I *am* cold."

"I'm going to get up and call the doctor myself then," I groaned.

"You're not either. Lie still, for goodness' sake. I'm just beginning to get warm."

"I will wait a minute," I thought, "and then jump up suddenly and out of bed. I'll 'phone the doctor and take a stomach-pump if necessary." I remember the storm quickened, and the sleet and rain and snow drove in alternating waves against the window-panes. I remember listening again to the waves and picturing them out there in the dark, driving foam-crested up on the white shore and flowing back and driving up

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again with mighty rhythmic strokes. . . . "I will wait a minute," I thought. . . .

I am no hero.

CHAPTER XXVIII

—*Minnie Is The Answer*

THE next morning, or rather the same morning, after a dim daylight had come, Miss Febber suggested a pony of brandy before breakfast to buck us up. I ordered them and a quart of champagne. That was Thursday. It was champagne all Thursday; whisky all Friday; and gin was scheduled for Saturday, for the sake of variety. The storm had kept up, with slight abatement now and then, for three days. We did not move out of our rooms. All that we wanted was brought to us.

On the rebound from my high virtue I seemed utterly possessed by some lunatic desire to go as far in the opposite direction as possible.

Once or twice it occurred to me that Mr. Fippany had not come down and that *his* cure must have been rapid and thorough. I laughed des-

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perately. His transformation and mine had been instant and complete.

Miss Febber had a fancy to keep the bottles we emptied and to arrange them around on the table and the dresser of my bedroom in geometric patterns. The chambermaid wanted to carry them out, but we resisted stubbornly.

On Saturday morning, when I woke up, I noticed that at last the sun was coming in through the windows. It made my room and everything in it look soiled, shabby, obscene. The mingled odor of perfume, various alcoholic liquors, cigars, and cigarettes seemed especially atrocious now in that sunlit room. I was seized with an overpowering desire to rush back to New York. Miss Febber said she was willing.

It was about eleven o'clock. I ordered our breakfast and started across the small hall to the bath-room. I saw a morning paper that had been stuck under the hall door, my own paper, the "Transcript." I had n't looked at a paper in two days. I picked it up and, lighting a cigarette, lay on the lounge in the hall reading it.

Presently there was a knock on the door. Our

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waiter, I thought, was quicker even than usual this morning.

"Come in," I said, my head buried in my paper.

"There 's my poor, sick Jim now." I heard the rustle of a flying figure; I heard the world crack. Addie rushed in and sat on the side of the lounge where I lay with my paper. I remember the silver-gray color of her suit, that brought out so beautifully her black hair and eyes and her exquisite complexion. For the first time, I recollect, I noticed how closely her small ears were set against her head. I was stunned and dazed into speechlessness, and I found myself noting the number of buttons on her coat, the texture of her shirtwaist that was visible at her throat, the wide distance between her eyes, in a sort of idiotic desperation.

Putting her arms around my neck, she began laughing softly and playfully as if she had sprung an innocent little trap on me. "Yes, you thought, Mr. Jim Pickett, you would creep off and be sick all by yourself, did n't you?" Her eyes were dancing and rocking, and her laughter had that deep, throaty note that always in-

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licated that she was especially happy and well pleased with the world and everybody in it. "But, I've caught you, sir; I've caught you. You sha'n't be sick all by yourself and your college wife only two hours from New York.

"I was talking to mama over long distance on Wednesday night, and of course I asked how you were. She tried to put me off, but I dragged it out of her that you'd gone away to Atlantic City because you were feeling a bit off. So I jumped on the train and rushed home that very night. I was going to come right on down here the same night, but papa over-persuaded me, so I did n't come, then. He was furious with mama for telling me you were sick. So I agreed to give you a day or so to be delightfully miserable all by yourself.

"Why, Jim, I was afraid. I knew you'd never tell me you were sick for fear I'd worry. Jim, you *must* get well. Do you remember what year this is and what is to happen within a month or so when I come parading away from Poughkeepsie with that diploma you were so bent on my having—that diploma that was to make you love

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me 'a little more perhaps.' Well, it is nearly in my hands now. It can't possibly escape me. And so I cannot take any chances on losing my Jim, can I? So I came down to nurse you."

Mr. Fippany had come just inside the door, had shut it, and stood with his back to it. I remember his brown felt hat was low over his left eye, but he looked as if he were sorry for me. I sensed that protective comradeship which is always among men, even when they are not friends, in certain situations. I admired the sportsmanship of the gallant Mr. Fippany. So far as he could see, I had beaten him; but he was not revengeful.

"Jim," he said, "I tried to get her not to come down here. I told her you wanted a day or so all by yourself where you could feel entirely alone. I told her that a man in a nerve-rackin, business such as yours must be has got to have a time off now an' then to be quiet where he don't need to speak a single word to a mortal soul or to answer a single question if he don't want to. I held her Wednesday night, Thursday, and Friday because I said I was sure you would be back in town by

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Friday. And when you did n't come last night there was no holdin' her. She would have 'phoned, but the wires were all down, even the telegraph wires. She was certain you were on your death-bed. You know Addie. She threatened to come off down here alone. If she was bound to come, of course I had to come with her.

"The clerk down-stairs was sure at first that no one named Pickett was here, but Addie described you and said you came Wednesday night during the storm. He remembered that No. 560 was the only person who came that awful night. I wanted him to 'phone up first, but Addie stopped him. She said she was goin' to surprise you."

"And I did, did n't I, Jim? And so now I am here to take charge of you. I know you've been working too hard. I don't want my Jim to go to pieces; he must be finer than ever when summer comes and brings our day. Oh, Jim, I've already begun to get my things together. What do you think of that? I think maybe we'll come down here on our honeymoon; for a while, anyway, because you seem to like Atlantic City. It will be crowded, but we won't care, will we?

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We'll be alone if there are ten million people here.

"Jim, what do you think? I am in the class play. I would n't tell you because, as once before (don't you remember?), I wanted to make sure first that I'd do all right. Do you remember when I went on the stage with the O'Sheas? But now the director—and he's a real theatrical man from Broadway—says I'm quite all right and so everything is safe and now it can be told. I've the principal rôle. I suppose—see, Jim, I don't say reckon any more—that my début before the footlights with the O'Sheas did help me, don't you? Oh, it's a very tragic rôle I have too, and you'll cry maybe when you see me in it. I cry myself. And, oh, dear, I feel like crying now, but I don't know why."

She laid her head against my shoulder for a moment, then started up suddenly.

"Why, look, papa; Jim has n't had a shave in ages, and there are dark deep rings under his eyes, his dear old gray eyes. He's sick and bad sick too; I *know*. Yes, I'm needed here; I'm sorry I did n't come at first, as I wanted to. I

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will take charge of you, Jim, and see you through. Papa, try to get rooms for you and me on this floor.

"It is terribly stuffy in here, Jim, and there is an unpleasant odor. Let me look at your bedroom windows; I'll warrant you have n't been keeping them open at night, you're so forgetful of yourself."

"No, no, Addie, let's take a walk an' give Jim a chance to shave an' dress up a bit. Then we'll come back." Mr. Fippany looked meaningly at me and started toward her with his hand out—an instinctive gesture of protection.

But Addie jumped up and walked rapidly into my bedroom. Curiously, I have a picture in vivid detail of her back as she disappeared through that door—she was so straight, so strong, so graceful, so obviously healthy and wholesome, so expressive of a new importance and a new dignity, her blue felt hat sitting so snugly and jauntily on her black head.

As for me, I remained in a numbed trance. I could say nothing and do nothing. I had a feeling that great stretches of time were swiftly sweep-

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ing over me and aging me years in a minute. I remember I had some sort of vague wild hope that Miss Febber would disappear; how, I had n't the slightest idea. Mr. Fippany stood again with his back against the outside door.

"Why, Jim!—" I heard Addie call out my name and then her voice quavered off into throbbing silence. I heard my heart pounding. I still foolishly held the newspaper gripped in my two hands. I had hardly moved a muscle. I was frozen with horror.

Presently, following a period of aching quiet in the room, I heard a slight noise. I remember saying to myself, "She is crying," and I had a picture of her patting at her lips with her hands as if to beat back the sobs. How many times when she was a little girl had I helped her when she was in trouble and in tears, patting at her lips desperately. I remembered the gesture, I could see her in my mind, but I could not move. Now I could not help her in there. It occurred to me that probably I should never again have the right to try to help her, and I writhed in silent torture.

It seemed centuries before there was again quiet

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in the bedroom. Then she came out. She brought a champagne-bottle—I remember its sickly green hue—and a squat-shaped whisky-bottle and set them down on the floor by the lounge. Then she brought an armful of silk stockings, camisoles, nightgowns, and other hideous things and laid them by the bottles. Kneeling by the lounge in the attitude of a little girl about to pray, she sat still a moment with her eyes lowered; then she raised them, all wet with tears, to my face. I could feel her eyes on me, I could see them shining out of the corners of my own, but I could not look into hers.

“Jim, in God’s name, explain. There *is* an explanation, I know. But, Jim, if there should n’t be, why—why, I reckon I ’d go crazy. There, I said reckon again.” She tried to laugh, but it quavered off into a sob. I could make out that her right hand was moving nervously about her throat as if she were having difficulty in breathing. Now and then she patted at her lips.

“Jim, you have n’t spoken to me since I came. You have n’t even looked at me. At first I was so glad to see *you* I did n’t notice that. You

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act as if I were a stranger, as if you were a stranger.

“Are n’t you my Jim, who has stood by me and my people since the beginning? Are n’t you my Jim, who is the soul of honor and courage and chivalry? So I have said it a million times in my heart, so now the words come quickly to my lips. When in school and college our classes came to that period called the period of chivalry, I said to myself that I knew what it all meant.

“Look, papa, he won’t give me his eyes even when I ask. Oh, won’t you look at me, Jim? You seem so far away. You don’t seem to know me. Look, Jim, this is only Addie, your Addie.

“Jim, this is Addie. You first called me your little pal; don’t you remember, oh, don’t you remember, Jim? I would slide down the old brass pole to see that you were safe, because they told me the Tenderloin was a dangerous place. I was afraid for you, more afraid even than I ever let you know, much more afraid than I let you know because I did n’t want you to think I was small of courage. Then you called me your little pal. Oh, Jim, look at me.

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"Jim, this is Addie. Do you remember when mama was sick and the wind blew the yellow candle-light and you and I made a promise? I am *that* Addie, Jim. You gave me a ring, and I was so proud. Look, here it is, Jim, on my finger.

"And then that night on the roof when the boats full of music drifted by, and the moon shone, and I said the old gas-tank looked like a great silver pot for a good giant to eat his soup from, do you remember that, Jim? And you said you would love me forever and ever and ever again. Oh, Jim, let me see your eyes. Papa, he won't even look at me now.

"Jim, this is Addie, this is your Addie. You said if I went away to college you would love me even more than ever. And I went to please you. I would have done anything to please you. Jim, you will never know what it was for me to go away; you will never know. Did you know, Jim, that I crept up-stairs that last night and sat outside your door and prayed that something would happen to keep me near you?

"Jim, this is Addie, and all she asks is an ex-

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planation. You *are* good, Jim, and true and loyal. There is an answer, I know. Won't you tell me, Jim?"

Miss Febber, in her yellow kimono, smoking a cigarette, appeared at the door of my bedroom. She had already had several drinks.

"I'm the answer," she said quietly. "You poor kid!"

Addie rose slowly to her feet. I could feel her eyes go to Miss Febber's face and then back to mine. My eyes were riveted on a dark stain in the white ceiling above me. Out of the corners of my eyes I could make out that Addie was patting at her lips with both her hands.

"Jim," she whispered, "I am waiting." Now she leaned over me and held out her hands.

Mr. Fippany opened the outside door. And Addie, now as erect as a soldier, walked out of it and carried all my hopes of paradise with her.

CHAPTER XXIX

—*Argument Without Answer*

It is now 4 A. M. and I have been sitting here in the "Star" office since three o'clock, alone, but I have n't written a line until now. I have been reading back over what were the hardest things for me to put in the glare of black type on white paper. I have been fearing that when the time came I could not bear to do it.

But, come, we have a little farther to go. By nightfall of that Saturday in Atlantic City I was back in New York, in a hotel for a few days until I should find a place to sleep within my means; and Miss Febber was to stay with the group of girl friends who kept their own apartment. So she had said as she left me at Times Square.

Saturday night, Sunday, and Sunday night I sat in my hotel room, playing over and over again the game I had lost. If Addie *had* come to my room at any time before 3 A. M. of that Wednes-

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day night, as she might have done if she had rushed on down to Atlantic City in obedience to her fears, I should have been able to look into her eyes and say, "Trust me, Addie; I can and will explain all this, and within twenty-four hours, when we are alone." But after that the explanation was—was indeed Minnie Febber. She and my boundless foolish faith in my strength and my bottomless ignorance of that force that drives every living body in the universe.

If I had only pretended to be too sick even to lie down, if I had not hesitated to listen to the waves of the sea when I had just planned to jump out of the bed and 'phone the doctor—oh, God, if, if, if! That wretched, infinitesimal little word will drive me insane yet.

By Sunday night, and a poor sportsman I was, I suppose, to take so long to reach the decision, I had determined that as I had played my game and lost it there was to be no more squealing, no more explanations and protestations to myself. I had lost paradise, but I had staked paradise.

And so I went to bed and slept like a rock.

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At ten o'clock Monday morning I was up, at noon I was at the office, by 2 P. M. out on a story. I remember the city editor handing me a slip of paper and saying: "Here, Pickett, you've had a fine rest and must be feeling fit. See if you can't get us a rattling good funny story out of that. Let's brighten the old sheet up." I got it, but I could not write it as a funny story. It left my typewriter a rather sad affair.

The machine of habit had laid hold of me as soon as I entered the office; I found myself going through the same old routine. As people in a besieged city or on the edge of one that has just been destroyed go on, after the first shock, about their habits of existing—eating, sleeping, making love, buying and selling, washing clothes, praying to God—so now I went on existing.

I had lost paradise, but I had staked paradise.

By Wednesday I had found a room to sleep in, the very room I now occupy, in West Seventieth Street, with Mrs. Ainslie, who was to give me breakfast. I sent to Six-A House for my huge old red trunk. All that I owned there was neatly

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packed in it by Li Teo Po, to whom I had telephoned. He was to be a harmless spy for me and to tell me the news of my old home.

The following Sunday night I met him in Mott Street. Things were going on seemingly as usual at Six-A House, he indicated; habit was at work there too. Miss Febber had sent for her things. Miss Laddie was n't going back to college. Mr. Fippany had taken her away, far away, the good old Chinaman did n't know where, for a long rest. No, no, he would not tell any one he had seen me. He promised to meet me again the following Sunday night.

Miss Febber called me up at the office several times. "When am I going to see you, Jimsie?" she asked. "I have lots to tell you. For one thing, I came darned near losing my job. I told them I had been very sick indeed. You put that lie in my head. I never think about being sick, and I'd have tried to cook up some other excuse if I had n't remembered you. What about to-night?"

I was so busy I had n't a minute to spare, I answered. I would let her know when I could

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get a day off. So I said. I resolved to have *no* days off for a long, long time. A man in the grip of that resolution is not despised on a daily paper.

It is not to be thought of course that I was at all able in spite of all my thundering at myself to keep from playing over and over again in my mind the game I had lost, especially at night when I had gone to bed. I lay there and stared into the darkness going over every detail until long after day was dropping grayly down into the air-shaft upon which my single window opened. I had lost paradise, but I had staked paradise. I did not then realize why I was driven, by some force beyond my strength to overcome, to play the game over in my mind. But had I, in very fact, lost every single chance of my heaven? That is what something in me was trying to discover—was there no tiny point of light in the pit of blackness to the bottom of which I had fallen? And one night, late in March, when the wind was howling outside and sucking pieces of rustling paper up my air-shaft and then dropping them back again, suddenly, from a stupor, I sat up in bed and almost shouted. “Why, good God,

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man, why don't you go and tell Addie everything, absolutely everything? You've got nothing to lose. It will hurt her, but she can hear what you say and can understand most of what you mean? If Mr. Fippany were in a condition to realize what was behind your movements he would want you to tell her, for her sake if not for yours. She is entitled to frankness at least. Go, man, go!"

The little point of light grew swiftly into a great flood of light. On the rebound from hopelessness I hoped now for the utmost. I could see myself walking with her along some quiet path in Central Park at sundown, myself drooped and abject, telling her in all frankness every last detail of the game I had played and lost. And why not? She and I were comrades. Every high school girl, and much more the college girl, has had her zoölogy and botany. The machinery and nature and something of the power of sex were known to her as scientific facts. Indeed, girls probably had much clearer intimations of its force than boys of the same age. But Addie was no longer a child even; why could n't I keep that before my mind? Addie was a woman, a wise

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woman, a sympathetic woman. Yes, she would hear my defense and judge me. I trusted that she would believe me. So I argued with myself.

I saw her, in my mind, look away from me a long time when I had told her everything. She was staring at the rocky path along which we were walking. For a while, when I had finished, she said nothing. Then, without raising her eyes, she whispered, "Jim, do you love me—that's all I want to know—do you love me, Jim?"

Well, I lay there until day came. I suppose the room was only dusky gray with light, but to me everything was radiantly illuminated. When I heard other people moving about in the house and footsteps out on the sidewalk I got up. Mrs. Ainslie, who had no other roomers at the time in the apartment she occupied with her grown son, was shocked with surprise at my early rising.

I had breakfast and rushed out on the street in a fever of excitement. It was too early yet to 'phone Mrs. Fippany for Addie's address, so I walked over to Central Park and visited the places that were favorites of hers—the big pond at the upper end, where often we had skated, the

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rocky wooded bluff at its south end, the long graveled walk around the reservoir where we had done so many joyous swinging miles of walking, arm in arm, while we planned for the future, the Mall and the tree-clad, zigzag path on the west side where the rhododendrons bloom in such breath-taking splendor in the spring.

At nine o'clock, from a booth in the old Hotel Netherland, just outside the park, I 'phoned Mrs. Fippany.

"Mrs. Fippany," I said, "will you give me Addie's address? I know she is out of town. I want to write to her."

"No, Jim, I must not do that. I want you furthermore to promise me that you will not write to her or try to see her. Why hurt her any more than you have, or even risk hurting her? You could do nothing but wound her now by communicating with her in any way. Don't you see that? Will you give me your word, Jim? I must, I will, trust you."

"No, Mrs. Fippany, I can't promise. I am sorry that I can't do as you wish, but I mean to

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write to her if I can find out where she is. I assumed of course that it would do no good to write to her at Six-A House in the hope that you would forward the letter."

"No, Jim, we are taking no chances. We've got to see everything that goes to her for a long while. Won't you give me your word, Jim? You have changed a great deal."

"No, Mrs. Fippany; and I am very anxious to write to her at once."

I turned to Mr. Fippany, knowing that his wife would warn him quickly if indeed they had n't already agreed as to what should be done in such an emergency. Whether she beat me through to him on the 'phone I do not know, but his answer was instant and firm.

"Jim, you must not ask any favors of me. What I did at Atlantic City was more for Addie's sake than yours, though I did feel as sorry as the devil for you. You double-crossed me. You talked with two faces; you said every damned mean thing you could to me to scare me away from a certain person an' with your other face

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you were makin' love to her. Good Lord, something 's happened to you, Jím, somewhere along the line. You 're rotten. You leave Addie alone. If you hurt her any more I 'll kill you."

Well, I did think of the shabby tricks yellow newspaper men practise to get addresses, photographs, and letters. But I had never used them for the sake of a newspaper story; I could n't use them where Addie was concerned. Nor would I ask Li Teo Po to get the address for me.

I thought once of going to Mrs. Fippany and telling her the whole story and asking her assistance. But she had n't known how seriously involved Mr. Fippany had been. She was now no doubt losing her worry about him, and probably he had been entirely cured of philandering. The revelation now might be the shock that would hurt her as I had prevented her from being hurt. After a few years she could be told, if necessary; but not now. Moreover, there were details that I simply could not tell *her*; and, besides, I would wait and see if I could not come by the address in some other way, would wait until there were no other way before even considering her again.

Argument Without Answer

And within ten days I received this letter from Addie on the stationery of the hotel where she was stopping in the mountains of South Carolina:

DEAR JIM:

It's no use. My pride is in the dust. I have written some such letter as this forty times, then torn it up. This one must go just as it is; I will not read it over once. If I do I am afraid I might not let it go either. Papa brought me here and stayed a few days with me; then he had to return to New York. Anyway, I don't need any guardian. There's only one person outside of myself who can give me any relief.

If and when you feel that you can talk over frankly with me what has happened, please do so. Remember, I am not a child any more. Indeed I feel to-day as if I were considerably over a hundred.

I could n't go back to Vassar of course. There is nothing there for me now.

Whatever is ahead of us and behind us, let us be friends, Jim. Friends once more, anyhow. After a while we can talk without pain, without

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too much pain, perhaps. Please let us try at least.

It is comfortable and restful here in South Carolina, though not so very, very much warmer than it is in New York. But there are lots of green pine-trees, and mountains that carry your thoughts up out of yourself, at times. Yesterday I saw some pigeons

ADDIE.

There was no period after "pigeons." The sentence just stopped suddenly. A hastily written—at any rate the words were almost scrawled—postscript said:

Jim, the dear old ring won't work any more. I turn it and turn it, but you won't come.

The letter had dropped down upon me in the afternoon as I sat in the office waiting for an assignment. I wrote a telegram at once:

The ring is working. I am there in spirit now. To-morrow the rest of me will be there. Thank God!

JIM.

Argument Without Answer

Our newspaper operators had not yet come in, so I rushed out to a telegraph office across the street. Then I hesitated. No, I would not send the telegram until I was about to step on the train that night. Then I could put in it, "Am boarding the train in five minutes."

As I stepped back into the "Transcript" office to ask a week's leave of absence an office-boy was shouting, "Mr. Pickett, Mr. Pickett, telephone!" I went to a booth. Miss Febber's voice was low and strained. I could hardly hear her.

"Jim, I want to see you to-night."

"Can't be done. I'm leaving town to-night early, and I've got to put in the rest of the afternoon getting ready."

"You *must not* leave town, Jim, without seeing me. You must see me or I'll do something desperate and crazy. Do you want to meet me at Shanley's at six o'clock?"

"I tell you, Minnie, it can't be done. I've got to go."

"Jim, you *make* me tell it over the telephone. Do you hear me? I am trying to whisper it. And I can't help crying this way, Jim. Listen;

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something's happened. It's over six weeks since Atlantic City."

That night I met Miss Febber, and the next day I wrote Addie.

DEAR ADDIE:

Forgive me if you can. There's nothing I can say, nothing I can ever say. I wish to God there was. Good-by.

JIM.

CHAPTER XXX

—Perhaps Poetic Justice

IN the newspaper world of America, and I suppose of all other literate countries, the vagabond reporter is a frequent figure. Some of them are moved merely or mainly by wanderlust, the insatiable hunger to see new places and new peoples. Some are simply unstable men, often broken nervously, usually addicts of one sort or another, of liquor or narcotics, who can do brilliant work for a few weeks or months and then slack into undependabilities of all kinds, so that they must move on to find a new position where they are not known. And some are haunted men, going on not to seek new supplies of drugs or liquor but to find forgetfulness if possible, to find something that will take them out of themselves, to find some cool healing for a burning soul.

I was a haunted man. I carried a letter of recommendation from Mr. Gleason, which brought

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me work where there was any to be given, and a daily paper of any size can use an extra man at almost any time if the editor really wants him. But I never stayed more than six months in one city; less, much less, in most places. I could not be still; I had to move on.

It never occurred to me to try to strike root anywhere, to solidify my position, to buy a house and to become a part of any little social world. I did not feel that I was or could be an integral part of any community; other people were but vague figures to me, to be approached and spoken to and traded with of necessity on occasion and then to let pass on into what was for me an outer world of darkness.

Nor was I interested in my work any more. There was no adventure, no glamour, no excitement in it for me now. I was a piece-worker, getting through one little thing and going on to another. I did not attempt to do very well anywhere. I suppose I did passable work. What was given to me to do I did mechanically, spiritlessly, but probably acceptably. I was indeed even popular with more than one hard-boiled city

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editor. "Thank the powers that be," was their attitude, "here at last is a reporter who never overwrites his story; don't let him escape."

I was a creature of habit: having done the first of a series of habitual things, I would go through the entire series without effort and without interest. Even my newspaper stories were things out of a machine of habit. I had a pattern for almost every type of story that goes into a daily newspaper. Supplied with a few names and addresses and the other essential facts, and having written the first paragraph, I pushed the rest of the story out of my typewriter without thinking and without even looking at the keys, pushed it out indeed while every sense in me was concerned with a mental picture of a little black-haired girl sliding down a brass pole or frolicking with a blue and black beagle-hound or, later, grown up, kneeling at my side in a hotel room.

Frequently I went on doing things that were no longer needed because I had started them when they were needed and could not stop. I remember McGill of the "New Orleans Times-Democrat," a frantic night city editor of worn-

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out nerves, who told me one night about twelve o'clock not to finish the story I was writing because the paper was full. My ears heard him, my tongue said, "All right, Mac," but my hands went on pounding the typewriter. When the story was finished I walked over and dropped it on his desk. He looked up at it, jammed the typewritten sheets on a hook of unused copy, glared at me for a moment, and then said gently, "Go home; you 're tired out."

For a very little while, in every new city I entered, in spite of myself, and without being at all conscious of it then, I was stimulated by the fresh environment to do work somewhat better than perfunctory. Perhaps my urges to move on came from some twilight zone of my mind where it was known that if I did not move on to a new environment from time to time I should soon be doing work that was not even mechanically good.

No letters followed me. There was none to come that I knew of. I had cleaned up what few business affairs I had before leaving New York. I told my friends at the "Transcript" office that

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I was going to Chicago for a while and then further westward. That caused no great surprise. Newspaper men are forever coming and going across the face of the world.

But I did not go to Chicago. I went to Richmond.

Minnie was a rather comfortable traveling companion. Within a month after I had married her we left New York. She did not object; and so far as I can remember she never objected when I began packing up things as a signal for her to begin also. She is herself a born vagabond, I think, but of the healthy kind. She wants to see new places and peoples.

She had no baby. It was in Richmond, I remember, in a boarding-house, about six weeks after we arrived there, that one morning as I was shaving at an old-fashioned wash-stand by a small square mirror with a mahogany frame, and she was slowly pulling on a stocking, she said casually, "Jim, I'll declare I believe I was mistaken; in fact I know now I was mistaken; I'm not going to have any baby."

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"I'm not surprised, now," I said, going on with my shaving. But in my mind I noted, "That was the trick she would have played on Mr. Fippany if it was necessary."

But Minnie was n't at all a lame sport. Presently she learned that I was n't the wealthy man the myth-makers at Six-A House had pictured me. I had nothing except my weekly salary and a small and ever decreasing surplus, relic of my brave days on the "Transcript."

"Well, that's a cruel blow," she declared, laughing. And she never said anything more about that. She too had lost something in the game we had played. We were a pair of losers.

There was no demand that Minnie exercise any housewifely virtues, if she had them. We moved always in the world of remunerative guests through the South and in the plain world of boarders through the rest of the country. Arriving in a new city, without even going to a hotel, we read the wildly romantic "Boarders Wanted" column in a newspaper and selected almost at random one that purported to have "sunny rooms and excellent cuisine" and that was near the busi-

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ness part of town, and moved in. Usually we remained there until we bought railway tickets again.

A newspaper man with morning paper experience sticks to morning paper work if he can. Afternoon newspapers are to him a sort of alien and lesser field, where things are too hurried and hectic and telephonic, in his opinion, for comfort. There is n't time, he will argue, to go out and get a story and write it decently; as a rule, one must run, snatch at something that has the color of news, telephone it in, and then later see a distortion in the paper that does n't look at all like what he sent in. Perhaps he is just prejudiced; the afternoon man can make out a good case for himself. But the fact remains that the morning paper man remains of the morning field if he can possibly manage it.

And so with me. Wherever I went I tried first the morning papers, though often the afternoon journals were far the more prosperous and paid the better salaries.

Rarely was I in bed before three o'clock. On the smaller papers outside of New York most of

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the men stay on late. Minnie usually sat up until midnight or after, and when I came in she would wake up and talk a while. Then she would get up between ten and eleven o'clock the next morning with me. Other people's lunch was our breakfast.

How she spent her afternoons, and her nights before I came in, I did not inquire. Minnie was one of my outer world of shadows; a little less dim than others of that realm because I was forced to see and hear her more than the others, but no more interesting and little more zeal.

I gathered vaguely that she did some sewing, took what she called her "beauty naps," went to the movies, wandered in the department-stores searching for bargains and occasionally buying them, and now and then taking long walks in the country roundabout with some of the more robust women of the boarding-house we happened to be in.

She kept up her morning and night exercises, took excellent care of her health, which she thought of and spoke of always as her beauty, and dressed well. She did not hound me for

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money, using my allowance judiciously to take care of her needs; did not ever try to mother me, did not ask questions, was always ready to move on, did not press me about anything at all, was mildly cheerful, and indeed was a most comfortable traveling companion for me, if I had to have a traveling companion.

She interested me not at all and irritated me little. Her voice, which was rather hard and nasal, grated on my nerves occasionally; sometimes she called me "Jimsie," which was an abomination to me; she picked her teeth, which were bad and often needed the attention of a dentist; and in every city we entered she usually carried on simultaneously three or four transactions which she no doubt called in her mind "love-affairs." But she was usually careful of appearances and cautious of her gifts.

And I had the notion, and I did not try to find out, I am afraid, whether my notion was only that or a certainty, that I was, on the whole, a comfortable traveling companion for her.

A newspaper reporter who has been on a New York journal never loses touch with that city.

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It is the center of the American news world, and when he is working in America his own paper is full of stories bearing New York date-lines. They mean more to him than to most of the other readers of the paper.

They remind him of streets and buildings and personalities and movements that are dearly familiar to him. He tries to visualize a big story as it appeared in the various New York papers; and it interests him to pick out in his mind the men on the several New York staffs who could have handled that story best. And then virtually every daily journal gets all the New York morning and some of the afternoon papers. Reading the despatches from New York in the local paper I happened to be working on, and now and then reading a New York paper from first page to last, was the only interest I had.

I gathered from the flow of New York news that Addie, using the name of Winnie O'Shaughnessy, remembered from the time of her début with the O'Sheas, had gone on the stage after a year and that her work was both honest and promising; that the O'Sheas, after a while, had

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begun appearing in her companies; and that Mr. Fippany's business was growing enormously. A real-estate story said that he had bought and moved into a house with twenty-seven rooms in East Sixty-sixth Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues. I wondered then if he had sold Six-A House, but I saw no mention of that in the real-estate news. Still I realized that a note of its sale could have appeared on many a day that I never saw a New York paper.

Within three years I had worked in Richmond, Charleston, Atlanta, Little Rock, Houston, Galveston, Dallas, and several smaller places.

At Dallas I was compelled to take a job on an afternoon paper. The only morning journal had no vacancy; its staff was as steady as the federal bench. Minnie and I stayed in Dallas longer than in any other one place, eight months. So far as I was able to pay any attention to a city we lived in, I liked Dallas. It is, as even large American cities go, comparatively new, but it is building with the faith of an old city certain of itself, and its life is so vigorous and stimulating that it touched even me.

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One afternoon in July the city editor of my paper asked me if I wanted to cover a tarring and feathering by the Ku Klux Klan, scheduled for that night. "Go on," he said; "it may interest you. You are from the East and probably never covered that sort of story." I did not tell him that I was born and raised not far to the south of Dallas itself. I never talked about myself to the men on the papers I was now with.

"A wave of virtue has struck our fair city," the city editor went on, puffing at his pipe while he eagerly read the last edition of a rival paper to see if he had been beaten on any story; "and the victims are to be, I am told, a man and a woman. We sha'n't want much even if it comes off. The less said about such things the better—better for Dallas, I mean. But we've got to cover ourselves. Something unusual *might* happen. We don't want the names, unless there is violence of some sort. We don't count tarring and feathering as violence. Maybe the man will resist, or even the woman or some of her relatives, and there might be some shooting. But if everything goes off smoothly, don't bother about writing

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names, and give us three or four sticks for the first edition. Get a taxicab at the Oriental Hotel and tell 'em to charge it to the paper."

At dinner I warned Minnie that I had a night assignment and would come in late, possibly very late. The weather was obscenely hot and sticky. I gathered up a rain-coat and set out for the office immediately after dinner. I wasn't to start for the scene of the promised story until nine o'clock, but I always found my newspaper office in those days a pleasanter place to pass the time than my boarding-house. It was there I could find New York papers, and get drunk on dreams.

I was not interested in the Ku Klux Klan, which was just then beginning to reorganize in the South after its long period of quiet following the Civil War and Reconstruction times. But I always worked on any assignment given me. I was never interested enough in them to try to dodge one kind of story and capture another that I liked better; they were all alike to me—death-watch, suicide, wedding festival, divorce trial, burglary, return of a famous son to his native city, convention of the state organization of skat

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players, sermon of the Rev. So-and-so, statement of John Doe about to be hanged—yes, they were all alike to me: a few facts to gather and then some paragraphs to write.

Taking a taxi for the night, and telling the chauffeur I might drop him at any time, in which case he was to come on back to his stand in front of the hotel, I set out to follow the directions supplied to me by the city editor. We drove three or four miles out into the farming country and dropped down into a swamp bottom near the Trinity River. Seeing a red light somewhat larger than that of a lantern in a grove of stunted oak-trees off the road a few hundred yards, we made for it. The celebrated fiery cross soon came into view, surrounded by a circle of white-clad figures, among whom was a sprinkling of men garbed in what may be termed, for the sake of convention and convenience, civilian clothes. There were a hundred or so automobiles in the edge of the grove, most of them Fords.

The ring of standing figures was protective of the chief actors in the middle of the circle under the cross, which hung on the side of a tree. It

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was a rather shabby affair, a naphtha torch of the kind used by circuses, properly shaped and not at all large. I tried to get through the crowd at one or two points but was pushed back each time.

"Who are you?" I was asked. I told them the name of my paper.

"Well, you 'll see and hear all you 'll need to see and hear if you 'll just keep still; more than you 'll print by a long shot."

From time to time I caught glimpses of what was going on under the fiery cross. With rare delicacy the guardians of virtue were covering the man's middle with a breech-cloth after they had stripped him; and the woman was being ostentatiously hidden from view by several sisters of her sex who were standing closely around her as they took off her clothes.

"They 're going to leave her stockings and union-suit on," I heard. "And if she has n't a union-suit they 'll give her one as a present. The tar and feathers will stick to them. That will be bad enough; she won't forget."

I saw the contents of four or five pillows emp-

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tied on the ground; then I saw some one using what looked like a broad whitewash brush on the man. Wherever it touched him he was black.

The night was ferociously hot and sticky and close; the sick, damp moon slid along behind wet gray clouds. I sat down on a stump. I knew this was but the beginning and that before the night was gone I should have material for twenty times as much space as had been allotted to the story, unless something very much out of the usual run of tarring and feathering happened.

I sat there beating at the mosquitos swarming about my steaming face, listening idly to the great thick buzzing that comes from crowds in multitudinous conversation. The mosquitos were not at all awed by the Ku Klux garb. The knights suffered cruelly from the heat conserved by their robes and pointed head-pieces. Now and then some of them lifted their pointed hoods to mop their loyal and virtuous but streaming brows; and the mosquitos gnawed at their ankles so that occasionally they were compelled to lift their robes and rub their wounds regardless of dignity and ceremony. There was no shouting, no coarse re-

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marks, no loose talking. The guard of virtue took itself and its work very seriously.

Presently there was a movement of the ring. It broke into several hundred individuals, who scrambled for their cars. The victims were now, I knew, to have their shame-ride.

Tied in the rear seat of a large open automobile, the upholstery of which was thriftily covered with an old piece of brown canvas and many newspapers, the pair who had offended the sensibilities of their judges and punishers, rode at the head of the line of cars back to the city, the man lying back with poorly simulated ease against the protected cushion, the woman bent forward with her face in her hands. The front car carried a small lighted cross held aloft by a knight who rode with the driver. Again there was no unseemly noise. It was a grim, silent, stern procession.

There were few people on the streets when we got back to the city, after midnight. My taxi was back toward the end of the line, along with the cars of other non-members, but I caught the name of the man who was now trying to grin

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his way through the shame-ride. The Klansmen had called him "that skunk of a fellow," and his partner in punishment they more moderately termed "that loose woman." The man I knew was a middle-aged shyster lawyer who affected the rôle of a Texas Don Juan and whose hero in conduct, character and legal strategy was Aaron Burr. I could not catch the name of the woman. She was not well known; even some of the knights did n't know her name, or so they said; but she had been duly convicted by some inner circle of the Klan, and they were satisfied that the punishment was deserved and would be salutary.

The procession rode down Main Street to the County Courthouse and back up Elm Street, the two chief thoroughfares, passing under a brilliantly lighted wooden arch thriftily left standing after a recent convention. It said: "Welcome." Here and there a lonely man on the sidewalk yelled, "That 's the stuff; give 'em the tar and feathers"; and an occasional prostitute, running loose out of the bounds of her prescribed reservation, screamed in derision, whether at the victims or the knights, no one knew.

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The rather tacky and shabby shame-ride was now nearly over. The man was taken to his home in a well-to-do section on the outskirts of the city, where there were many handsome houses and many green trees. He was set on his front porch, his clothes were piled neatly by his side, the door-bell was rung violently, and the procession went on its way. One or two of the knights were left behind, across the street, to see that some one should come out of the house and rescue the feathery Don Juan.

The woman had now lain down sidewise on the back seat of her car and was not visible a dozen feet away.

The procession, returning to the business section of the city, quietly came to a halt in front of my boarding-house. The woman was set out on the front porch with her clothes piled by her side, and the old-fashioned pull-bell was snatched a foot out of its socket. But before it was answered from the inside I had leaped out of my taxi and had reached the weeping figure crouched on the floor.

"If the dirty beasts have injured my skin in the

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least," she sobbed, "I'll sue 'em for a million dollars. You see if I don't. I know two of them, anyway."

"Never mind your precious skin, Minnie. Stand up and let me put this rain-coat over you. You've got to get inside and up those stairs before that door-bell is answered."

CHAPTER XXXI

—*Straight Back To Broadway*

BUT I did not care even about the tarring and feathering, or about what it signified. Divorce? It never occurred to me. Did it matter what the shadows out there did or did n't do? And so as I drifted westward Minnie went with me.

At the end of five years we had reached the Pacific Coast, and there, in San Francisco, she asked me one night to provide grounds for a divorce. I had just come in from my paper. It was a short June night, and I stood at a window staring unseeingly at a colossal pink fan unfolding in the East. Minnie sat in bed, gorgeous in blue silk pajamas, busily polishing her finger nails.

She said she had met a ranchman from Alaska for whom she had taken a violent fancy and who wanted to marry her if that was possible. He was trying to get her to elope with him, she declared, and she would if that were necessary.

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"Not that you would care a hoot of course, Jim," she went on seriously, "but I can't tell Pete that. After all, though, we haven't got on so badly, have we? You never can tell about these things, but I think Pete is *the* man I've been looking for. We've fallen for each other hard; it looks like the real thing to me. Jim, I never knew what it was before. Gosh, it does unlock things in you, don't it, and light 'em up? This big hunk of a man I'm going to marry has no idea what he's getting in me. He thinks he's just getting a shape and a laugh. I'll show him, he's getting a wife."

Minnie and I had already lived long enough in California to establish our status as residents; the divorce was not at all unpleasant or difficult; and she sailed away northward with her ranchman—I think he has, or had then, a herd of several thousand reindeer. It was the great adventure for Minnie. I have had various letters from her, telling of herself and big Peter and their log-cabin in the still valley between white-headed mountains; of their children, their rising fortunes, their great content.

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As for me, I wandered back to New York. My period of vagabondage had not given forgetfulness or provided a cure for that dazed, dead feeling that forever possessed me, and still possesses me though to a less extent. I wanted once more to live in the city where Addie moved and had her being, and to die there when my time came.

I did not try to get back on the "Transcript." Newspaper staffs change a great deal in five years, but I knew there would still be men on the "Transcript" who remembered me when I was alive. I shrank from explanations and from pity. Moreover, I thought that Mr. Gleason might begin giving me important assignments again, and I feared that test. I could n't face the idea of his seeing me fail on a big story. Besides, I did n't now want anything that could possibly engage more than a third of my mind; the rest I craved for myself.

The "Star" offered me the Long Emergency trick, which is usually given to new men merely to try them out and get them used to the office, the expectation being that they will work out of it

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within a few months. That was five years ago. I have n't tried to work out of it; I have resisted all efforts to lure me out of it; I am now accepted as a sort of Long Emergency institution.

Mr. Herschell, the "Star's" small and appallingly active and ambitious night city editor, one copyreader, and two reporters were on the "Transcript" when I was there and knew me in the splendid old days. I am accounted a little queer, a mystery, and perhaps I am the subject of imaginative myth-makers, but no one pries into my affairs, I do my job, and time flows over me.

I rise at twelve o'clock these days, because I do not get to sleep easily at night and I am not really needed at the office until eight o'clock; have breakfast at Mrs. Ainslie's by one; and am out on the streets by two.

Summer and winter, rain or shine, I walk through Central Park, stopping a while at various places that used to appeal to Addie. We have never met face to face there since I came back from the Coast, though I occasionally see her at a distance, usually riding on the bridle-path.

But probably she would n't recognize me if we

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did meet. I have changed a great deal. My black hair is streaked with gray now, I am a little round-shouldered, my clothes are seedy, and my demeanor that of a man of a hundred and ninety or so. I am forty and she is thirty, but she has changed little and that little for the better, so far as I can see. Her figure has filled out, and she has the grand air her mother's daughter was destined to have. What may be in her eyes I cannot say; I never see them at close range. But I hear her voice in the theater, and I know that whatever more she is she is also, unchangeably, the little Addie who was, in that Golden Age of mine, at once comrade, mother, and sweetheart.

Passing out of Central Park, I walk eastward to First Avenue, down that to Twenty-second Street, westward to Six-A House. It is closed now, but Mr. Fippany has not sold or degraded it. The neighbors there tell me that he will not listen to offers to buy it. The furniture is still in it, they say, and it is kept in good repair and condition. I look through the clean panes of glass at the old brass pole, almost imagining I can see Addie's white-clad figure come fluttering

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down from the regions above. I think I can hear again that soft, throaty laughter of hers which came when she was blissfully content and radiantly happy. She needed no outside cue for that laughter; it flowed irresistibly out of the boundless joy that was in her.

I go on next to Madison Square Park and sit there a while to rest, often among those other derelicts who also are merely drifting on. Who knows but what there is some dear association for them in these benches, these trees, the St. Gaudens Farragut that forever commands the fleets of Fifth Avenue as they flow by, and the glorious Diana who flies above Madison Square Garden?

When I am rested I go over to the sidewalk opposite the Garden where the pigeons are constantly assembling on the chance that one of their admirers will happen along with peanuts or corn. Most of their faithful friends appear around noon-time, but I come late in the afternoon, in good time for their supper. If I stand still they fly at me and flap their wings, as long ago Addie's pigeons were to do to make me think of her.

And then, about six o'clock, I come to Mou-

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quin's on Sixth Avenue, where often we used to celebrate some happy event. I sit at the same small table every night, in a far corner, and have the same waiter. I know all about him and his family. He has a son in college, who is wild and who is ashamed of his father's trade, and his wife is an ether addict. This tiny, black Frenchman seems surly, but he is n't really. He and I get along famously together.

Walking along Sixth Avenue and into Broadway, I come at last to the "Star" office, where I am once more Old Long Emergency. And so the days go, and the weeks, and the months, and the years, and my life.

CHAPTER XXXII

—*To An Amiable Shadow*

AND so now, dear imaginary reader, we are met here in this vast, lonely city room of the "Star" office, at 3:30 A. M., for the last time. Only my single green-hooded desk-light is burning. The office is quiet and almost entirely dark. No one else will enter here until five o'clock, when the two cyclonic scrub-women will come charging in with their brushes and pails. Come up out of the shadows, won't you, and let me thank you?

Created by me to be as a confessor, you have given this narrative whatever of clearness and straightforwardness it may have. Surely you have served me better than any Freudian psychic healer could have served me, who would probably have interrupted me with silly questions, asked me what I dreamed last night, sworn at me when I said I did n't remember, and been a well-meaning nuisance generally. But you have asked

To An Amiable Shadow

me nothing and have let me tell what was to be told as I liked.

If this confession, this purging of the deepest and darkest pits of my mind, does somehow sweep the creeping shadows away from my soul and make my eyes see clearly again and wake me from my long dazed trance, I must be accordingly grateful to you. But whether or not I am touched to life again, you have done your part; and though you are but a creature of my imagination, you are an old friend and I am seized by the fancy to give your hand a hearty shake and say, "Good-by, and God bless you!"

It occurs to me, now that I ask myself what I am to do with these typed sheets, that maybe some day, when I see a very old man with a sickle turn a corner suddenly and make for me with a broad grin, I shall leave them addressed to that one who, if any one is ever to see them again, I should want to read what is here written. I have been planning to destroy them once the last page was completed. And maybe I shall, maybe I shall; but not to-night, not to-night. Somehow, to tear to pieces and suddenly dump into the waste-

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basket all these typed sheets that have meant so much to me, would seem ungrateful, cruel. No, not to-night, not to-night.

In the meantime, until I steel myself to tear them to pieces, or decide finally to leave them addressed to Addie, I shall make a package of them now, stamp it and write her name on it, and then take it home with me, or leave it here locked in my drawer. If anything *should* happen to me before I destroy it some one will forward it to Addie and then I shall at least have provided against its being read by merely curious eyes.

The long row of red stamps pasted across the seam of the wrapper paper will serve especially well as a protection against me too, for I know I shall be tempted to open the package, as long as it is not destroyed, every day or so to change this word or to try to clarify that sentence. As if that mattered! I must leave it alone, leave it alone. It is done. Thank God, it is done!

I am tired to-night. There has come some strange psychic let-down since I finished the narrative I set out to tell, since I completed the circle I began months ago. My head keeps falling on

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my breast; my eyes keep closing in sleep. Sleep! Oh, if once again I am to know those long, slow soft hours of continuous healing sleep! But I feel an unaccustomed weakness too. What if my next sleep is to be a very deep one indeed.

I shall make up my package, and then doze here a few minutes before the scrub-women come. They will wake me up.

POSTSCRIPT CHAPTER

—*To-morrow And To-morrow*

AGAIN I sit late at my desk under the one green-hooded light. The deep hum of the presses comes up to me from the basement far below. The shadows in the distant corners of the long room seem to be moving about and consulting among themselves. I hear something softly swishing against the windows, like a cautious signal, and I see white snowflakes touch the glass pane near me to the left, hold on a moment, as if looking in at me, and then slip down out of sight. I sit with my feet propped up on the desk staring far across the room.

Over there I see the door open from the lighted hall. Li Teo Po comes in. Inside, when the door is closed, the light is very dim where he is, but I recognize his thin, stooping form at once. I hear his felt-bottomed slippers sliding along the floor. Now he is near me. He has not changed in the slightest, so far as my eye can see.

To-morrow And To-morrow

"Come," he says; "Miss Laddie waits for you."

I rise, put on my overcoat, go down-stairs with him. At the curb there is a car waiting. Li Teo Po opens the door, motions me in, closes it, gets up on the seat with the chauffeur.

We go swiftly down Broadway, now quiet and dim, the engine softly purring. At Twenty-third Street we turn eastward, drop down one block, and round the corner into the still street that holds Six-A House. A second more and we are there. Li Teo Po opens the door with his usual bow and his usual smile. The sidewalk is white; the snow is still drifting down, slipping slantwise down a north wind almost gentle.

We enter Six-A House, and I see a light in the dining-room. The table is set, and my old chair is in its accustomed place.

"Miss Laddie say maybe you hungry," Li Teo Po whispers, and bows and disappears into the kitchen.

I sit staring about the table and at the walls and chairs and rugs and pictures. It is all just the same, just the same.

I hear a fluttering sound outside the dining-

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room door. Addie is coming in, the back of her left hand shielding her eyes from the light, the fingers of the other to her lips, her hair a black avalanche down her back, her little red slippers darting from beneath the hem of her white gown.

She sits in a chair by my side, and I know she is looking at me, though I dare not look at her.

"I turned the ring to-night, Jim," she whispers, "and you are here. I have turned it so many times and then could not feel you anywhere near. Look, Jim, it is your ring, and no larger than when—than when—"

She looks away, and I must turn my eyes to her. I see her breast rising and falling spasmodically with deep, struggling sobs.

"Don't, Addie; for God's sake don't! This is only a dream, but I can't bear much more."

"Oh, Jim, I know everything now; I know that whatever happened you were fighting for me. As you were about my diploma, I love you even 'a little more perhaps,' if that were at all possible, which it is n't. And I think I begin to realize what you must have suffered, suffered because of me."

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She is silent for a moment, and then she goes on, "Yes, and I know you are just a dear, tired old newspaper darling, and now you must be quiet and rest and rest and rest.

"Jim, there is a bayou in a pine forest where the tall pine-trees are always whispering among themselves. I see a log house on a bluff above the bayou. It has a long front porch and a long one behind, too. In the front yard are flowers, many kinds of flowers, and back of the house is a big vegetable-garden, all fenced in so that the chickens and the ducks and the geese and the turkeys may run loose. The ducks and the geese may go down to the bayou to swim and to make their nests; the others may go ranging out in the woods as far as ever they please.

"There is a flat-bottomed boat below the bluff, among the white and yellow water-lilies; it is for us to drift in down the stream under the soft gray moss. Not far in front of the house is a white country road through the green woods, where wagons and buggies pass every hour or so; and sometimes the people in them stop in at the log house to talk a while and to have dinner. Two

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miles away is a small town; on Sundays and on Wednesday nights the church-bells come out that far if the wind is right, and on other days the whistles from the sawmill and the cotton-seed mill come floating into the doors and windows of the log house even when they are shut. And sometimes a chicken-wagon man, and his whole family too, if he has one, stops there to stay all night and to talk about what he has seen along the long white road that he travels."

"Oh, Addie, though there is no log house there now, I know that place."

"Where is it, Jim? I can't remember."

"You do remember. Out beyond Crebillon, down in Louisiana, where I met the chicken-wagon family that night."

"Oh, yes, so it is, Jim, so it is." And she laughs quietly, her eyes rocking and dancing.

"Where I saw you the first time, Addie."

"Well, Jim, now we shall go there and build that house, and listen to the bells and the far-away whistles and the whispers of the tall pine-

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trees, and be quiet, and rest and rest and rest."

And then she stands up, reaches out her arms, and says, "Jim, won't you kiss me again as you did when you said you would love me for ever and ever again?"

After that she sits down once more, draws her knees up to her chin, and goes on: "And when you have had a long, long rest down there in the pine woods, we are coming back, if you like, and live in Six-A House. The Rossmores will go on staying with mama and pap, but Mr. and Mrs. O'Shea will live with us here, and so will Li Teo Po. Papa has given the house to us. He said you bought it first, anyway, and that if it had n't been for you we should n't have had it at all."

She gives a low whistle. Presently I feel something rubbing against my legs under the table, and then a blue and black beagle-hound puppy slides his nose between my legs, looking up at me with his appealing brown eyes.

"Oh, Jim, he seems to know you already. He

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is a Breaksteel, too. There have been two since that first one of long ago. Don't you remember, Jim; don't you remember?"

And then Mr. Fippany, now a round ruddy figure of a man, comes down the stairs, and Mrs. Fippany, very stout indeed and looking with eager appealing gentleness at me, and Major Rossmore, as jaunty as ever though he is very old now, and his little gray crinkled wife, and the unchanging O'Sheas. Instantly Li Teo Po bustles into action, and soon there is a feast spread for us all. No one asks any questions, and every one is quiet and jolly and kind. And we laugh and talk as if the old days had come back again. And Mr. O'Shea teases Addie about her friend in the newspaper business.

After a while the others go back up-stairs. Addie and I talk a little longer, in whispers despite ourselves. Then she says: "Jim, won't you see me safely to my little room before you go to yours? In yours away up there on the third floor you will find everything ready and everything just the same, just the same."

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I snap out the light, take her hand, and lead her up the stairs, to her door.

But there I cannot let her go. In the light of the hall I stand scrutinizing her face, studying the broad white forehead and the thick black eyebrows almost touching above the nose, and the little bonfires that blaze and beckon away back in her black eyes; and then I feel uneasily along both her arms from her hands to her shoulders.

"Oh, Jim, your hands are trembling. Do you still think it is a dream?" She leans against me and looks up smiling.

"It must be, Addie. I don't understand. How *could* you know?"

"The package came through the mail. Why, I could tell what happened as easily as if I had been there in the office and saw it all. You dropped asleep after you had made up that precious package, then the cyclonic scrub-women, as you called them, rushed in on you, and you, half-asleep, picked up the package and dropped it in a mail basket because you saw that it was stamped—or the scrub-women did, bless their hearts.

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I'll give them both fur coats and hats with willow plumes a yard long."

"But can you still love me, Addie? After reading that?"

"Could I help loving you—after reading that? Oh, Jim, Jim, I've never stopped loving you—nor you me. Kiss me, Jim, kiss me again as you did that night up there on the roof after our first quarrel."

We hear an old owl of a ferryboat out in the East River hooting mournfully through the storm, hear an elevated train come thundering out of the north and slowly disappear in the distant south.

"Papa will be after me in a minute," she whispers, grinning. "Good night, Jim, until to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow."

"Good night, Addie. . . . But I know I'll be hearing my alarm clock go off after a few hours, and then *surely* I'll wake up looking at the wrinkled ceiling in my ancient room at Mrs. Ainslie's."

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